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By Chu Meng

The Hong Kong public offer which closed at 12 noon yesterday was 420 times oversubscribed. Thus Beijing Media Corporation (BMC), the listing vehicle of *Beijing Youth Daily*, became the first Chinese mainland media company to launch an Initial Public Offering (IPO). BMC is expected to list next Wednesday.

Only 10 percent of the H Shares had been available for public offer. The remaining 90 percent offered by way of international placing was also oversubscribed. Who gets what and how much is all scheduled to be announced next Tuesday.

Ranked first in Beijing and in the top three nationally for newspaper advertising revenue, the company announced on Sunday its plan to list on the Hong Kong stock exchange, seeking to raise HK\$714-905 million (US\$116 million).

The media company announced in Hong Kong a global offering beginning this Monday of approximately 47.7 million H shares, subject to an over-allotment option. The price, which will range from HK\$14.95-18.95 (US\$1.92-2.44) per share, is also expected to be announced next Tuesday.

First buyer

MIH, a subsidiary of South African media giant Naspers, promptly announced on Monday it would take a 9.9 percent stake, almost half of the 25 percent stake offered to the public. The cost of Naspers's stake will depend on the share price that emerges from Beijing Media's book-building exercise, but it is expected to cost between US\$36 million and US\$45 million.

"Naspers has extensive multimedia experience," Du Min, executive vice-president and executive director of Beijing Media, was quoted as saying in a Xinhua report this Tuesday.

Naspers is a multinational electronic and print media group principally engaged in pay TV, print media, book publishing, Internet services, private education and technology. It operates in more than 50 countries in Africa, the Mediterranean and Asia.

Naspers also owns a 35 percent stake in Tencent, one of the largest Internet portals in China.

Li Yigeng, president of business development of MIH, told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday "What makes us confident about investment in China's sprouting media industry is because China has such a strict media admittance policy. The more cautious the government, the healthier the competitive environment it will form, and so the more qualified competitors will enter the market."

Potential profits

Li noted 71 percent of Beijing Media Corporation's turnover in 2003 came from newspaper advertising, 99 percent of which came from *Beijing Youth Daily's* advertising.

"On the one hand, it means Beijing Media's core revenue retains a strong capacity for profit. On the other hand, the advertising industry only accounted for less than 1 percent of China's GDP last year."

"Compared with developed countries such as America at 2.3 percent and developing countries such as South Korea at 1.7 percent, China's advertising industry has significant space for growth. That is the core reason why MIH chooses Beijing Media's stock."

Beijing Media's principal ad-

BMC Goes Global

City media conglomerate celebrates Hong Kong share issue

'71 percent of Beijing Media Corporation's turnover in 2003 came from newspaper advertising, 99 percent of which came from *Beijing Youth Daily's* advertising.'

Where Will the IPO Go?

Dealing on the main board of exchange is expected to commence on Wednesday, December 22. The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) is the global coordinator. Joint sponsors and joint lead managers are HSBC, CITIC Capital Markets and Oriental Patron Asia.

Assuming an offer price of HK\$16.95 and the over-allotment option is not exercised, the net proceeds of the share offer are estimated to be about HK\$677 million and will be applied as follows:

About HK\$100 million for developing a weekend newspaper;

About HK\$80 million for developing a number of weekly magazines focusing on management of personal financial affairs, lifestyle and cultural information;

About HK\$250 million for investment in the television industry in Beijing;

About HK\$200 million for the acquisition of other media businesses;

The remaining balance of about HK\$47 million as general working capital for the Group.

vertising medium is *Beijing Youth Daily*, which has the second-highest circulation in the city in 2002 and topped all Beijing dailies for advertising revenue.

Beijing Youth Daily generated an advertising income of 787 million yuan in 2003. Other core businesses are production of newspapers and trading of print-related materials. *Beijing Youth Daily* recently expanded into event organization and secured the 10-year rights to organize and market the China Open tennis tournament.

But because of China's unique laws and regulations for the nation's media, Beijing Media only participates in the production and printing units of the newspaper business. The editorial and distribution operations of *Beijing Youth Daily* remain separate from the listed company.

Multimedia platform

The capital raised will be used mainly for the expansion of its multimedia platform, including the development of the TV

industry, a weekend newspaper, specialized periodicals, event organizing and acquisition of other media businesses.

Beijing Media is uniquely positioned to benefit from the economic reform of the country's media industry. Beijing municipal government, the main shareholder in Beijing Media, has undertaken to grant it preferential consideration in its plans to engage in the domestic regulated media industry. It has also guaranteed Beijing Media will be the only publicly overseas listed media company under its control.

Sun Wei, president and executive director of the company, said that although foreign investors are excluded from ownership of the editorial business of newspapers, *Beijing Youth Daily* has granted Beijing Media an option to acquire any or all of its editorial rights at such time as any media ownership laws change in China.

"After accession to WTO, the Chinese government promised to open its media market to foreign capital as one of the agreements," Song Jianwu, director of Research Center of Journalism and Social Development of Renmin University told *Beijing Today* on Monday. "Therefore, Beijing Media's listing in Hong Kong indicates a breakthrough for the country's opening up its one-of-a-kind state-owned media sector to the outside world. But because of its unique corporate structure in which editorial and distribution units are separate from the listed company, the newspaper will maintain steady operations."



BMC Executive Vice President Du Min, President Sun Wei and Chief Financial Officer Lau Wing Kee launch the share issue in Hong Kong.

Photos by Li Peng

'We Have Full Confidence': Beijing Media Corp President

By Hou Mingxin

Beijing Today interviewed Sun Wei, president of Beijing Media Corporation, via telephone on Wednesday. He talked about the company's listing on the Hong Kong stock exchange:

Beijing Today (BT): What is the corporate-investor response to Beijing Media Corporation's Initial Public Offering (IPO)?

Sun Wei: Pretty favorable. For example, when I arrived in London on Tuesday, I was lined up to meet more than 10 institutional investors. With such limited time, it was impossible for me to meet them individually. Finally, I arranged a joint meeting with them. They all showed strong interest in our company's IPO. I even had no time to go to the hotel first. It was a pretty good roadshow in London, as it was in Singapore, Hong Kong and America.

BT: Besides South Africa's Naspers, how many corporate investors are going to subscribe to BMC's IPO? Would you please release the names?

Sun: Yes we are in touch with some company investors. I am sorry I cannot release any of their names right now.

BT: It is reported that BMC is going to allocate 40 percent of profits as a bonus to shareholders. Is that true?

Sun: Correct. BMC is serious and responsible.

BT: May I have your opinion



Sun Wei

about the timing of the listing, as some analysts don't think it is a smart move with Christmas Day and New Year fast approaching?

Sun: We have full confidence in our IPO. So I don't worry about that at all, whatever the date we go listed. I wonder if you have noticed our stock number? It is the number '1,000'. Some firms were going to get the number, but at last, we got it. I think that it's a lucky number.

BT: It is reported BMC planned to raise about 1.6 billion HK dollars, but why this time has the number decreased to below one billion?

Sun: The main reason for the cut of the IPO size was that we want to leave scope for future development.

BT: If the IPO cannot reach the planned target, what will the company do?

Sun: According to the current situation, I don't think the probability you mentioned will occur. On the contrary, I believe we will exercise the over-allotment op-

tion to sell an additional 15 percent of the IPO amount.

BT: As for BMC's plan to invest HK\$250 million in the television sector, some analysts said it would be risky as you do not have control of a distribution channel. Do you agree with them?

Sun: One of the reasons we entered the TV business was to create a cross-media advertising platform. Our customer base, which is mainly advertising agencies rather than individual advertisers, prefer us to offer advertising space on multiple platforms.

Faithful readership, good advertising partners and an experienced media management team are our advantages. We are contacting some TV partners and we will choose a satisfactory one. In fact, cooperating with TV stations, we have produced some good programs.

BT: In 2003, 71 percent of BMC's turnover came from newspaper advertising, 99 percent of which came from *Beijing Youth Daily's* advertising. After listing, will the advertising pattern change?

Sun: We will try to enlarge advertising platforms. Investing in the television industry is just one of our strategies. We will also seek to develop other advertising platforms such as outdoor advertising.

BT: After listing on the Hong Kong stockmarket, does BMC have plans to list on the domestic A-share market?

Sun: It will depend on the development of the company. Currently, we don't have a timetable yet.

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Limits Set for Management Buy-outs of State-Owned Enterprises

By Sun Yongjian
The central government on Wednesday announced bans on five kinds of management buy-outs (MBOs) at large state-owned enterprises.
Li Yizhong, secretary of the Communist Party Commission of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), announced the bans during a lecture at a summit of central government-backed enterprises on

Wednesday.
“In China, management buy-outs mean situations in which the staff of a listed company purchase its assets and therefore became its owners,” Li said.
He explained in one of the bans, administrators responsible for poor performance at enterprises should be kept from buying shares in state-owned enterprises (SOEs).
The new rules also outlaw kerf market equities transactions and

stipulate sales prices should be decided by open bidding in the market and company operators should buy shares at same prices as other investors.
Company managers are not allowed to lend money from SOEs and state-owned holding enterprises, including their own enterprises, and enterprise assets cannot be mortgaged.
“Management buy-outs are improper in large state-owned enterprises at present because

ownership and running rights will be merged into one when a management buy-out is launched. This will be unfavorable for forming an efficient company governance structure and may lead to the loss of state-owned assets,” Li said.
The secretary suggested pilot management buy-outs in small or medium-sized SOEs could be run, providing the legal rights and profits of investors, creditors and staff were protected.

Investors Allowed Say in Stock Pricing

By Qiu Jiaoning
The China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) issued a statement on its website on Monday that new regulations on initial public offerings will be enforced as of January 1, 2005, a change expected to give investors more say in setting prices.
The CSRC had issued a freeze on all domestic IPOs since August 31 to handle drafting of the new pricing regulations. “All companies issuing stock for the first time, including those that have already secured approval, must adhere to the new regulations,” a

CSRC spokesman said at a press conference on Monday.
Under the new regulations, companies and underwriters about to launch IPOs must get opinions from at least 20 potential institutional investors before pricing their stock. Those institutional investors can be fund, securities or trust firms, finance companies, insurers, brokers, assets managers and qualified foreign institutional investors (QFIIs). Fund companies and QFIIs must account for at least half of those surveyed.
The regulations stipulate that

arrangers of stock sales should set a price range after preliminary enquiries and then decide the final IPO price in accordance with the demands of institutional investors, a system used in many Western countries.
The CSRC official said the commission was trying to bring markets in line with international standards as the nation opened wider to foreign investors, adding allowing institutional investors into the pricing process would help China attract more money.
The new regulations will effec-

tively force the CSRC to give up control, especially of state-owned firms seeking access to fresh funding by going public, and hand it over to a market mechanism. The commission statement said it would still issue guidance if prices were set irrationally.
Before the suspension of IPOs, Chinese companies had raised 48 billion yuan in domestic shares sales this year. The Bank of Communications and PetroChina Co. were among the companies in line to go public when the freeze is lifted, *Beijing News* reported Saturday.

Companies Called On to Reduce Risks

By Qiu Jiaoning
Li Rongrong, Chairman of the State Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) Monday exhorted leaders of state-owned enterprises to attach great importance to risk control and crisis prevention in order to maintain sound development.
“Overseas investment in central state-owned enterprises (SOEs) has markedly increased in recent years, giving rise to greater risks. If we had a sound internal auditing and risk management system, the China Aviation Oil incident could have been avoided,” Li said at a work conference in Beijing.
China Aviation Oil (Singapore) Corp., a subsidiary of state-owned China Aviation Oil Holding Company, recently suffered massive losses of \$554 million through petroleum futures trading. To prevent similar future catastrophes, new supervisory regulations focusing on subsidiaries of big SOEs would be released next year, the *Edge Daily* newspaper said Tuesday.
“All investments carry risks, that is something that cannot be ruled out in business. But we should redouble our efforts to limit and avoid risk. After all, we cannot repeat this recent mistake,” Li said.
“SOEs should build up early-warning mechanisms for big investment decisions and performance evaluation systems to guard against various possible risks. The two essentials of a solid risk control system are sound corporate governance and effective restraining schemes.”
The chairman noted SOEs’ profits had grown to record highs, but said the companies still faced serious challenges from resource bottlenecks, excessive expansion in some industries and rising prices of raw materials.
State-owned enterprises should inject their high-quality assets into listed companies, he said, adding the government would adopt new measures to promote SOE reform and transformation to a share-holding system in years to come.



Special forces officers from the Beijing Public Security Bureau made their first public appearance on Wednesday. The crack squad is mainly charged with count-terrorism activities and combatting violent crime. XinhuaPhoto

City Gives Green Light to Emergency Warning Color System

By Annie Wei
Perhaps taking a page from the US Department of Homeland Security, the Beijing Municipal Government on Tuesday debuted the early form of a emergency alert plan based on color codes. Alarms in four bright colors would be used to indicate the seriousness of threats to the public in emergency situations, the government said in a statement on its website.
In 2004, Beijing experienced several potentially dangerous situations including the reap-

pearance of SARS, bird flu, fires and flooding.
Under the new plan, public hazards would be classified into four major kinds – natural disasters, accidents, public health and social security – with most emphasis given to natural disasters.
Those hazards would then be divided into four levels – general, mild, serious and very serious – and given corresponding colors of blue, yellow, orange and red. Alarms connected to the color system would be installed at gov-

ernment offices around the city so emergency response units could respond rapidly to any crisis.
One goal of the new plan is to change the public’s typical emergency response of simply calling the police. Emergency response centers should update their functions by unifying emergency hotlines and clarifying which organizations were responsible for handling criminal or security cases, traffic and fire accidents and other serious hazards, the government statement said.
Government bodies in charge should issue timely press releases and public notifications in cases of serious threats, it said.

No Limits on Car Numbers for Now

By Annie Wei
The Beijing government will not act to control or prohibit purchases of private cars, Liu Xiaoming, deputy director of the Municipal Committee of Communication, said during a press conference at the Beijing Olympic News Center last Friday.
Earlier in the year, responding to worsening traffic and pollution caused by the increasing number of cars on the capital’s roads, members of the National People’s Congress

suggested the local government act to reel in private car purchases.
Liu said there were 2.27 million automobiles in Beijing by the end of November. One reason for road congestion, he noted, was a lack of parking space, as there were only just over one million legal parking spaces for the 1.5 million autos downtown.
He explained that while Beijing would not issue a control policy, the government would move to ease traffic by encouraging people, especially

commuters, to use public transportation and raise parking fees while controlling the number of parking spaces in the city center.
Construction was already underway on three new subway lines and the city was focusing on improving its busing system, Liu said. This year, 39 new or adjusted bus lines would open and over 1,700 new buses would take the streets to replace older ones by 2008, when the city plans to have up to 42 percent of its buses running 24 hours a day.

South Korean Finance Watchdog to Open Local Office

By Deng Minjie
South Korea’s Financial Supervisory Service (FSS), the country’s financial policy supervision and management organization, will set up an office in Beijing in January, the Yonhap News Agency reported from Seoul on December 8.
The office will be FSS’s fourth outside South Korea. It currently has branches in New York, London and Tokyo, as well as an operation in Hong Kong under the Tokyo office’s supervision.
“We have signed a memorandum of understanding with the People’s Bank of China and China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) on setting up the office,” Choi Myung-hee, the chief of international cooperation department of the FSS was quoted as saying. “With increasing numbers

of South Korean enterprises extending their business in the China market, we decided to set up the office in Beijing.”
When the official opening ceremony is held in January, the office will become the first local operation of a foreign financial watchdog in the Chinese mainland.
The move was aimed at strengthening financial ties and improving financial supervision cooperation between China and South Korea, Mr. Fang, the director of the CBRC’s international department, told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday.
The CBRC has signed memorandums of understanding with financial supervisory authorities from 10 countries and areas covering information exchange, staff training, secrecy of supervisory information and other issues.

Commerce Ministry Issues Auction Rules

By Nie Zhiyang
China’s Ministry of Commerce officially released its first set of regulations concerning the domestic auction industry and foreign investment in the sector on Sunday, in keeping with its commitments for entering the World Trade Organization. The rules were published on the ministry’s website in the form of a department order and will take effect the first day of the new year.
The administrative measures set strict provisions for the qualification of would-be auction firms and

their branches and introduce standards for companies to enter the sector.
Auction firms must have a minimum of 1 million yuan to operate and can only set up branches after running for three years and earning profits in two, gaining more than 50 million yuan in turnover in the first two years and more than 200 million yuan in the third.
Firms’ certificates will be revoked if they do not hold auctions, or do not provide proof of payment of operational taxes, for six consecutive months without clear explanation.

New Plan Revises What Can Go Into Food

By Nie Zhiyang
Nine government departments, including the National Development and Reform Commission and Ministry of Agriculture, recently launched a joint plan revising national benchmarks for food quality. The plan is intended to raise existing standards for the food sector in order to better guarantee food safety nationwide.
Additives have become the prime culprit in making some food products ineligible for sales, the latest two-year check of the market showed, according to government sources. Most of the food safety accidents that have occurred this year were the result of misuse of additives.
To date, 22 categories of food additives, covering

1,500 products, have been approved by the Chinese government for improving the color, flavor or nutrition of foods.
Some producers, however, add excessive amounts of these additives or use unapproved chemical replacements, endangering consumers’ health.
The newly issued 2004-2005 Development Plan for National Food Standards states that existing national and sector standards for processed food will be rectified completely, with some merged and those found to be out-of-date eliminated. The percentage of adopted international benchmarks will increase to 55 percent from the current 23 percent to reduce international trade obstacles stemming from standard conflicts.

Standards Set for Establishing Financial Firms

By Nie Zhiyang
The China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) on Tuesday unveiled new regulations covering procedures for setting up financial companies within enterprise groups in order to strengthen supervision, streamline operation and enhance the quality of new financial firms.
The directions set crystal clear demands for all procedures, from petitioning and inspection to operation and application, a CBRC official said.
Based on earlier measures for supervising financial companies issued by the banking watchdog, the new regulations focus on requirements for qualification of parent compa-

nies, member units and eligible institutional investors, would-be board members, high-ranking managers and holders of other key positions.
The official said the commission was calling on lawyers and accounting firms to provide all needed materials so the CBRC could fully carry out its duties and ensure all materials were truthful.
The move is important for promoting the steady development of financial companies, allowing them to play important roles in internal management at large companies, boosting their levels of competitiveness and improving the investment environment, according to the official.

China Aviation Oil Sets Up Firm to Get Back on Track

By Sun Yongjian

China Aviation Oil Trading Co. (CAOT), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Singapore Exchange-listed China Aviation Oil (Singapore) Corp. (CAO) was established last week and started handling transactions on Wednesday, the parent company announced on Monday.

The subsidiary, established on December 9, launched open market bidding from December 15

to 17 for the import of aviation oil for January to February next year, the announcement said.

CAOT was established with financial support from China Aviation Oil Holding Corp (CAOHC) by way of injection of new funds into a trust account to enable the subsidiary continue its jet fuel procurement business on an agency basis. The domestic aviation oil giant has been reeling since CAO was discovered

to have lost approximately \$550 million through oil futures speculation, as *Beijing Today* reported last Friday.

The new company was preparing to purchase 460,000 metric tons of aviation oil through the bidding to supply to markets in Shanghai, Tianjin and Guangzhou, CAO spokesman Gerald Woon said on Wednesday.

CAO used to import around \$1 billion of aviation oil every

year before its financial crisis, *Beijing News* said last week.

CAOHC also wanted to make available new funds to support CAO's proposal to restructure its existing debt as announced on November 30. The money should enable CAO to continue normal business operations and lift the suspension of trading of its shares on the Singapore Exchange Securities Trading Limited ("SGX"), the company said.

By Annie Wei

Trading of No. 2 soybean futures contracts will start at the Dalian Commodity Exchange (DCE) in Liaoning Province on December 22 following the recent approval of the China Securities Regulatory Commission.

The exchange launched soybean futures trading in 1993, but in March 2002, the national government issued management statutes for genetically-modified (GM) foods, which split soybean futures contracts into two categories – No.1 for non-genetically-modified products and No. 2 for genetically modified ones.

Dalian Exchange to Start GM Soybean Futures Trading

On November 30 this year, the DCE issued specific trading rules for No. 1 and No. 2 contracts meant to set base prices and establish risk-avoidance systems in China's soybean market.

GM soybeans are important raw materials for domestic edible oil manufacturers and be-

cause China does not produce such soybeans itself, it has become the world's biggest importer of modified beans. That forces China to buy soybeans on the international market at the high prices set by the US' Chicago Board of Trade, the world's largest soybean exchange.

No. 2 soybean contracts could

surpass 200 million metric tons, the *China Business Post* said Monday.

The new contracts would cover beans produced in China, the US and South America, allowing domestic products access to the world market and building's China's role in international soybean price setting.

Domestic Firm Inks Deal with Dutch Telecom Operator

By Annie Wei

Huawei Technologies Co. was selected by Dutch mobile telecommunications operator Telfort B.V. to supply its third-generation network and a contract was signed in the Netherlands on December 8 in the presence of the country's prime minister and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao.

Huawei, a Shenzhen-based manufacturer of wireless, fixed network, optical network and data communication equipment, would provide technology to help Telfort B.V. better serve its two million mobile telecommunications customers, the company said in a statement.

The release added Huawei would support Telfort by setting up a research and development center in Amsterdam focused on end-user services.

Telfort CEO Ton aan de Stegge said at the signing ceremony he was sure Huawei would help his company develop innovative and cost effective data solutions.

"Huawei considers Europe its most important market and plans to increase investment in services and support systems in Europe," said Deng Tao, president of Huawei's European branch.

Neither side have revealed how much the deal is worth, but Dow Jones Newswires reported last Thursday the order was valued between 200 million and 400 million euros.

Huawei has already built networks for Etisalat in the United Arab Emirates, SUNDAY in Hong Kong, Emtel in Mauritius and TM in Malaysia. But in Europe, it has had to slash its prices to be competitive in a market already dominated by such international giants as Ericsson, Nokia, Siemens, Alcatel and Canada's Nortel Networks.

As Huawei's first client in Europe, Telfort expected to be treated as an important customer and get better service than it would from bigger, Western network suppliers, Ton aan de Stegge was quoted as saying by Dow Jones.



Clara Furss (third from left), Chief Executive of the London Stock Exchange and Air China Vice Chairman Wang Shixiang (center) attend a ceremony on Wednesday for Air China's listing in the London and Hong Kong stock exchanges.

Xinhua Photo

Tongrentang Investing in Hong Kong Factory

By Annie Wei

Prominent Beijing-based Chinese medicine firm Tongrentang is expanding its reach by opening a factory in Hong Kong, *Beijing Youth Daily* said on Monday.

The company signed a contract with Hong Kong Science and Technology Park on October 27 to establish a new factory with an investment of HK\$150 million, considered an important step in Tongrentang's move into the international market, the newspaper said.

Tongrentang, which first

earned its reputation as the royal pharmacy to eight generations of emperors in the Qing Dynasty, has opened pharmacies in 17 countries and cities overseas, including Singapore, South Korea, the UK and Canada.

"Although the costs of making products in Hong Kong are high, delivery time to foreign markets can be shortened to 20 days, compared to the average of three months for products from Beijing," Mei Qun, general manager of Tongrentang Group was quoted as saying.

Xie Tao, a partner in the merger and acquisition department of Price Waterhouse told *China Business* last month that Chinese medicine companies had been actively expanding and merging in the past year after more than two decades of little interest from foreign companies in Chinese medicine.

Tongrentang's Hong Kong factory was wholly-owned by the company and scheduled to start production before July next year, Mr. Liang from Tongrentang's press office confirmed.

Dalian Developer Makes 4 Bln Wager in CBD

By James Liu

Leading domestic property developer Dalian Wanda Group appointed Accor to manage the Sofitel Wanda Beijing, a 453-room hotel scheduled to open in 2006 on Jianguo Avenue on the east side of the city's Central Business District.

News of the deal was released and a contract signing ceremony held yesterday at the China World Hotel.

The hotel represents a small part of the developer's ambitious plans in the city. Wang Jianlin, chairman of Wanda Group, said at the signing ceremony that his group would invest 4 billion yuan to build Wanda Plaza, the largest integrated urban development project in Beijing, involving the re-development of 480,000 square meters of prime real estate in the CBD.

Wanda Plaza will include two office towers, a Wal-Mart supermarket, restaurants, a movie theater operated in conjunction with Time Warner, residential apartments and the five-star Sofitel Wanda Beijing. The huge complex will be located near the new headquarters of China Central Television and the Motorola and Hewlett Packard buildings and be home to Time Warner's Beijing office.

Bird Planning Plant in South Africa

By Deng Minjie

China's top cell phone maker, Bird Ningbo Co., is aiming to set up a joint venture company in South Africa in the near future, the *Beijing Morning Post* reported Monday.

After two years of preparations, Zhejiang Province-based Bird has launched a plan to expand into the global market and establish a huge distribution network covering Europe, India and South Africa. "The tariffs on imported finished cell phones are very high in South Africa, so we will likely have to build an assembly plant there and ship parts over so they can be put together on site," Dai Maoyu, Bird vice general manager, was quoted as saying.

In another sign of the company's globalization efforts, German press reported Monday that Siemens had decided to sell its cell phone operations to Bird.

"We signed an agreement with Siemens to establish strategic cooperation, but it doesn't mean we will buy Siemens' operations," an employee of Bird's public relations department surnamed Ying told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday. Sources from Siemens' Beijing office said they had not heard about the deal and declined to comment further.

Huarong Deals Off Billions in Bad Loans

By Qiu Jiaoning

China Huarong Asset Management Corp (Huarong) said in a statement Sunday that it has secured approval to sell 16 non-performing loan portfolios worth a total of 18.4 billion yuan to domestic and foreign investors.

Three of the 16 portfolios had been purchased directly by domestic investors, two by foreign investors, and eleven by joint ventures, *Asia News* reported the next day. Huarong had sold off two portfolios to Citigroup and another three to the Chinese company Aoyier, it said.

Authorized by the State Council, Huarong, one of China's four state-owned asset management companies, was founded on October 19, 1999 in Beijing. The major role of the company is to purchase, man-

age and dispose of non-performing loans acquired from financial institutions.

Huarong said that it had originally hoped to sell 22 non-performing loan portfolios with a total value of 25 billion yuan, but the prices offered for five were too low and no agreement was reached on one other. Related settlements were underway and expected to be completed by the end of this year, the company said.

Compared to the 16 months it took to get approval for the company's first international auction of 10.8 billion yuan in bad loans in 2001, it only took Huarong less than six months to obtain permission for the establishment of its joint ventures. Huarong attributed the quick approval to strong support from government agencies.

Great Wall Teams Up with IBM to Serve Asia

By Pan Hao

Great Wall Computer Co. formed a joint venture with IBM this Sunday to manufacture servers for the Asia-Pacific region. IBM will hold an 80 percent stake in International System Technology Company (ISTC) and Great Wall the remaining 20 percent.

The company will operate from a new plant in Shenzhen with initial production based on the former facility of International Information Prod-

uct Co. (Shenzhen), another Great Wall-IBM joint venture founded in 1994. Sources from Great Wall Computer Shenzhen Co. said provisional production would start in February 2005.

ISTC will produce and distribute IBM X series eServers in the Asia-Pacific region and also manufacture IBM P series eServers, the latest products in the American company's OpenPower series, for supply to customers worldwide.

Subway Expansion Supported by New Bonds

By Sun Yongjian

Between Wednesday and December 23, Beijing Infrastructure Investment Co. will issue 2 billion yuan of subway bonds, *Beijing News* reported this week.

All funds collected would go towards construction of new urban railway projects in Beijing, the newspaper said.

The 10-year enterprise

bonds are the first to be issued by the domestic subway industry. Galaxy Securities is the underwriter and the Beijing branch of China Construction Bank the guarantor of the bond issue, according to the report.

The bonds would have a floating interest rate with a minimum rate of 5.05 percent, it said.

Chinese Firms OK'd to Make Parts for Airbus A350 Jets

By Nie Zhiyang

Airbus shareholders on Saturday officially approved the European aircraft maker's plan for the deployment of its new, long distance A350 jets.

Chinese manufacturers would get five percent of the total workload for producing the new planes, the company said, in what would be the first time for the domestic industry

to take a significant role in the development of a top-level jet.

The A350, the new sister of the established A330 model, comes in two classes, the A350-800 and A350-900, Airbus said in a statement.

The new aircraft was designed by Airbus at the request of its clients and is scheduled to enter service in the first half of 2010.

Shanghai, Shenzhen Stock Exchanges to Lower Seat Fees

By Qiu Jiaoning

The Shanghai Stock Exchange and Shenzhen Stock Exchange have unveiled a package for adjusting seat holders' annual fees, the Xinhua News Agency reported Sunday.

By the end of the year, the exchanges would start calculating annual seat fees based on holders' trading volume, it said. In the past, all seat holders paid fixed annual fees of

30,000 yuan.

The new plan should lower annual membership fees, thereby easing the financial burdens of traders and other institutions and reducing trading costs.

The exchanges said they would continue to look for new ways to further reduce related expenses in order to increase activity in the currently stock slack market.

Japanese Convenience Store Chain Growing in China

By Deng Minjie

The Sino-Japanese joint venture Shanghai Familymart Chain Store Co. filed an application to open a new franchise store in Shanghai on December 11, the Xinhua News Agency said on Sunday.

Chen Mingzhi, a specialist from the general manager's office of Shanghai Familymart said the company hoped to open the store, its first franchise outlet in Shanghai, on December 27.

"Since July, we have opened 39 regular chain stores and invested 70 million in their operations," Chen said. "We still plan on carrying out our plan to invest around 175 million yuan in the near future

to open at least 2,000 chain stores in the Chinese mainland by 2008."

Lawson, Japan's second largest chain store company, would also expand its China operations to Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces next year, Xinhua said. Sources from Hualian Lawson, the company's joint venture in Shanghai, were not available for comment.

China opened the domestic retail sector to foreign capital on December 11 in keeping with its commitments to the World Trade Organization, a development expected to spark a flood of overseas investment into convenience stores in the China market.

VimpelCom Rejects Russian Tax Demands

December 10 (Computer Business Review) – In a press conference, Moscow-based telecoms operator VimpelCom confirmed that it would appeal against a tax demand for RUB2.5 billion (US\$90 million) and a further RUB1.9 billion (US\$67 million) in fines and penalties for money earned in 2001. Earlier in the week, VimpelCom had revealed the results of a preliminary audit by the Russian Tax Ministry that said it owed a total of RUB4.4 billion (\$157 million) in taxes for 2001.

CEO Alexander Izosimov said VimpelCom does not agree with the audit, and disagrees with the Russian tax authorities and its conclusions. “The whole logic of the Russian case is wrong,” he said.

Izosimov then confirmed VimpelCom would go to court if the decision went against them, and felt confident it would prevail in the courts as VimpelCom’s tax position had been previously checked by several other Russian tax inspectorates.

For a while now analysts and diplomats have been concerned about doing business in Russia, where companies have to deal with organized crime and local corruption, as well as possible political persecution by the gov-

ernment of Vladimir Putin.

This was highlighted after the oil giant Yukos was brought to its knees by a tax demand, and its boss imprisoned, in what was widely seen as retaliation for upsetting President Putin.

There are fears that VimpelCom’s tax demand is simply the next stage in a fight against Russia’s super rich businessmen. Observers see the tax demand as a move against one of VimpelCom’s main shareholders, namely the Alfa Group, an industrial conglomerate controlled by Mikhail Fridman, a billionaire businessman and one of Russia’s wealthiest men.

Analyst’s Take:

From the Yukos case to VimpelCom, the Russian authorities have been launching a series of government actions, trying hard to establish the rules for cooperation between the authorities and the enterprises.

According to a research report released by the Russian Audit Office at the end of November, tax evasion has become so common in Russian private enterprises that the authorities have to take severe measures to urge them to

shoulder more social responsibilities, such as tax contribution in line with state regulations and more domestic investment.

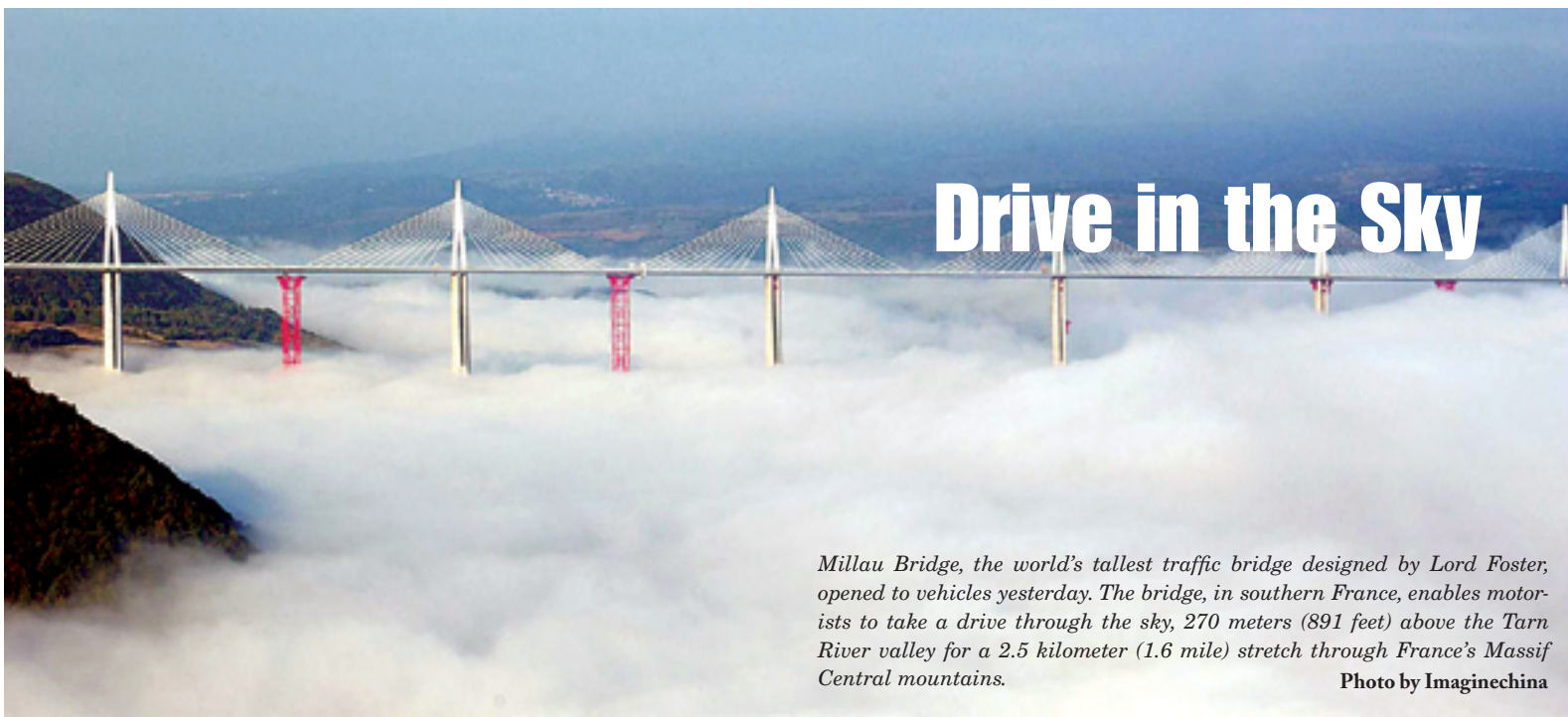
However, it is very conspicuous that the Russian authorities are not willing to launch a large social campaign to fight for the purpose because the private enterprises have shouldered very heavy tax pressure during the country’s privatizing process.

After all, the individual actions will have very limited effectiveness. The tax payment will not be reduced by a big margin due to the needs of state fiscal expenses such as national defense and anti-terrorist measures.

And any actions seen as too severe will lead to negative consequences; for instance, more private enterprises will transfer their investment to foreign countries. So the Russian authorities may choose to take a less hard line.

Some administrative measures may be taken such as the readjustment of resources allocation or the auction of operating permission.

– **Doctor Li Fuchuan, Institute of Russian, Eastern European & Central Asian Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Sun Yongjian)**



Millau Bridge, the world’s tallest traffic bridge designed by Lord Foster, opened to vehicles yesterday. The bridge, in southern France, enables motorists to take a drive through the sky, 270 meters (891 feet) above the Tarn River valley for a 2.5 kilometer (1.6 mile) stretch through France’s Massif Central mountains.

Photo by Imaginechina

Tokyo Stock Exchange Wants Chinese Companies

Beijing, December 11 (Xinhua) – Eisuke Nagatomo, managing director of Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE), Saturday said that TSE would close the department in charge of foreign listed companies, which enables foreign companies to enjoy national treatment on the Tokyo stock market. He believes that this will help Chinese companies to gain a listing in Japan.

Although there is still no local Chinese company listed in Tokyo, Financial Xinhua Ltd., which has some Chinese background, was listed on TSE in October this year, said Eisuke Nagatomo Saturday in a symposium held in Shanghai aimed at attracting Chinese companies to be listed and make investment in Japan.

“TSE has come out first in Asia and second in the world. A total of 2,236 companies had been listed on TSE with a total market value of US\$3 trillion by the end of august 2004. The trading volume of TSE is expected to exceed US\$3 trillion this year,” he added.

Analyst’s Take:

With the globalization of money markets, competition among stock markets is getting tough. Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE) has taken steps to relax restrictions on foreign listed companies in order to compete in clients with other stock markets, especially those in the US and Europe.

Japan is making redoubled efforts to develop Tokyo as the heart of Asian stock markets and sharpen its edge in the world money market. Market competitiveness is mainly decided by

market scale, involving quantity, variety and potential of its listed companies. So Japan needs to expand market scale through attracting not only domestic but also foreign listed companies.

By the end of June this year, domestic private capital in Japan had reached 1,426 trillion yen, more than 60 percent of which is deposited in banks. It is of great importance to find outlets for the massive private capital to avoid potential risks. As Japanese investors are paying much more attention to foreign stocks, foreign companies listed on the Japanese market are without doubt the best outlet for private investment.

One of the characteristics of the stock market is that future expectations dominate current prices; that is to say, listed companies whose business prospects are looking up can help lead a favorable price tendency. Therefore, Japan won’t give up strict examinations of companies to be listed, even though some restrictions are to be relaxed on foreign companies.

TSE will continue to pursue the strategy of attracting more Asian, especially Chinese companies to be listed. Multinational capital flow between China and Japan will facilitate interchange of money markets. In my opinion, it will be a win-win situation if Chinese companies can be listed in Japan.

However, compared with stock markets in the US and Europe, Chinese companies haven’t seen a clear advantage to being listed on TSE. Besides their own economic benefit, Chinese companies should also take a long-term view in considering internationalization strategy and the development of the Chinese money market. It is necessary for Chinese companies to make a sufficient estimate of difficulty and come to a full realization of the investment environment before they are listed in any stock market.

– **Liu Junhong, associate research fellow of the Institute of Japanese Studies at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (Qiu Jiaoning)**

China Moves from Aid Recipient to Donor

Beijing, December 14 (AFP) – China no longer needs the massive food aid it once received from abroad and has given a commitment to gradually step into a donor role instead, the World Food Program (WFP) chief said.

WFP executive director James T. Morris received the pledge from leaders including Prime Minister Wen Jiabao during a visit to China, one year before the agency was scheduled to phase out its regular food aid to the country.

The WFP, which has supported 30 million Chinese over the past quarter century, currently provides aid in the form of food purchased inside the country, supplemented with shipments from Canada and Australia.

Many observers have questioned whether China really needs this type of aid anymore, given its growing economic muscle reflected in its capacity to send a man into space and host the 2008 Olympics.

Since the late 1970s, a total of 300 million Chinese have escaped poverty – an “unprecedented accomplishment,” according to Morris – leading the WFP to hope China can share the lessons it has learned with other countries.

“I’m hopeful that China will partner with the World Food Program to help us do more, to take advantage of the strengths they have and experience to address these tough issues elsewhere,” he said.

The Chinese government last year provided nearly US\$25 million to support WFP’s work in China and overseas, according to Morris.

Analysts said it is an indication of China’s appreciation of the security aspects of hunger that it is a major provider of bilateral

food aid to North Korea, whose collapse would cause immense problems for Beijing.

“China’s involvement with the World Food Program in North Korea would be a very powerful message. The world perceives that China has a special relationship with North Korea,” he said.

Morris asked his Chinese hosts to help the WFP in North Korea, and received the reply that they “understand the importance of the issue.”

He said it was a “reprehensible, absolutely shameful” fact that the world has 300 million starving children, on top of more than 500 million adults without enough food.

“Twenty-five thousand people will die today because of hunger, 18,000 of them will be children,” he said.

“If you look at 25 or 30 countries in Africa, or if you look at Haiti or Cambodia or Laos or Bangladesh, there are many places in the world that need the kinds of things we do more than China does,” Morris said.

Local Report:

China will gradually increase its donation to the World Food Program (WFP) according to its conditions, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao in Beijing Tuesday.

Liu said at a regular press conference that WFP Executive Director James Morris paid a visit to China from December 9 to 14, at the invitation of Chinese Minister of Agriculture Du Qinglin. During the trip, Morris inspected some WFP projects in Gansu Province, northwest China, and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing met with him on separate occasions.

“China is a developing country with 29 million impoverished people, but since there are still 850 million people living in poverty in the world, China will gradually increase its donation to the WFP according to its capability,” said Liu.

China is willing to make joint efforts with the WFP to contribute to global poverty alleviation, he said.

– **Xinhuanet, December 14 (Qiu Jiaoning)**

FCC to Vote on Wireless Access on Planes

Washington, December 15 (AP) – Federal regulators plan to vote Wednesday whether to allow air travelers wireless high-speed Internet access. And they plan to talk about, without a vote, whether to end the cell phone ban.

The Federal Communications Commission also is looking again at the contentious issue of how to increase competition for local phone service.

First, however, commissioners plan to deal with the airline issue. David Stempler, president of the Air Travelers Association, a passenger group, said the changes under consideration would “make business travelers more efficient and while away the time for a lot of other passengers. This is all the wave of the future here.”

Currently, the only way passengers on domestic flights can communicate with the ground is through phones usually built into the seat backs. That service isn’t very popular: It costs far more than conventional or cell phones – about \$3.99 a minute – and the reception is often poor.

Fiat, GM Hope to Avoid Court Battle

Milan, December 15 (AFP) – The Italian Fiat group and US General Motors seem set for tense “mediation” to avert possible legal action over a disputed option by Fiat to sell its auto business to the US company.

Fiat said that talks on Tuesday to reach agreement on the option had failed and that GM intended to launch “mediation” procedures.

This was then confirmed by GM in Zurich, Switzerland, where the unsuccessful talks were held.

The two groups had agreed a year ago not to take legal action over the disputed option for 12 months, expiring on Wednesday December 15.

Under the industrial alliance in 2000, Fiat obtained an option to sell its fragile auto business, the main component of the parent industrial conglomerate, to GM.

For the US group, which owns 10 percent of Fiat Auto, the option appeared to be based on sound business prospects at the time, but since then Fiat has hit a financial crisis from which it is now recovering, running up losses and debt.

Fed Raises Interest Rates

Washington, December 14 (AP) – The Federal Reserve on Tuesday raised interest rates for the fifth time since June and signaled it was likely to keep pushing them higher at a “measured” pace in the new year.

The latest quarter-point increase raised the federal funds rate, the interest that banks charge each other, to 2.25 percent, more than double the 46-year low of 1 percent in effect when the Fed kicked off its credit-tightening campaign six months ago.

The increases have been designed to back off slowly from the exceptionally low interest rates the central bank had put in place over the previous three years as it battled a bursting stock market bubble, a recession and the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Responding to the latest increase, commercial banks quickly moved to boost their prime lending rate, the benchmark for millions of consumer loans and business loans, by a quarter-point to 5.25 percent.



Oracle Scoops Up PeopleSoft in \$10.3B Deal

San Francisco, December 14 (AP) – Oracle Corp. finally scooped up bitter rival PeopleSoft Inc. after 18 months of legal and verbal strife, ending a nasty feud with a \$10.3 billion deal that promises to shake up the business software industry.

Oracle sealed the agreement, which was announced Monday, by upping its all-cash offer by 10 percent to \$26.50 per share.

The final offer represents a 75 percent premium from PeopleSoft’s market value before Oracle launched the takeover battle in June 2003.

Bolstered by the addition of PeopleSoft’s 12,750 customers and nearly \$3 billion in annual revenue, Oracle is betting it can mount a more serious challenge to German software maker SAP’s leadership in business applications software - the computer coding that automates a wide range of administrative tasks.

Oracle is already the world’s largest supplier of databases – a position it hopes to strengthen by getting PeopleSoft’s customers to spurn rival products from Microsoft Inc., IBM Corp. and Sybase Inc. in favor of Oracle’s wares.

After completing the takeover next month, Oracle expects the PeopleSoft acquisition to boost its earnings by about \$400 million, or 8 cents per share, in the fiscal year ending in May 2006.

Yukos Seeks Bankruptcy

Moscow, December 15 (Reuters) – Russian oil major Yukos has filed for bankruptcy protection in a US court and will seek an injunction to stop Russia from auctioning off its main production unit on December 19, it said on Wednesday.

Yukos also asked the court to order Russia to arbitration, so that it can seek billions of dollars in damages over “an unprecedented campaign of illegal, discriminatory and disproportionate” tax claims.

The Russian government intends to auction Yuganskneftegaz, the crown jewel of fallen oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky’s business empire, at a starting price of \$9 billion to help recover \$27 billion in back taxes owed by Yukos.

“The steps we took today were done as a last resort to preserve the rights of our shareholders, employees and customers,” Yukos CEO Steven Theede said in a statement.

“Unfortunately, we believe it was the only resort left.”

Government Moves to Quell Public Doubts

Hearing on Heritage site price hikes still controversial

By Liu Zhaoxi

Officials from Beijing government agencies and administrators of six World Cultural Heritage sites in the city came forward on Wednesday to respond to widespread public questions over the recently-revealed scheme to raise ticket prices at the famous tourist sites and a related public hearing.

After the November 30 public hearing, media around the country expressed widespread disagreement with the price raising plan, while people started voicing doubts about

why delegates at the hearing spoke in unanimous approval of the scheme. Further questions were brought up about how the representatives were selected, reflecting many people's concerns about how well the hearing actually reflected public opinion.

At Wednesday's press conference, representatives of the Beijing Municipal Commission of Development and Reform and the Bureau of Parks, as well as administrators from the Forbidden City, Summer Palace and the four

other sites, explained the main reason for raising admissions was to better protect the historical places.

Beijing Today first reported on the hearing on December 3.

The 21 representatives at the hearing included experts and site administrators. The experts, mainly from national organizations and universities, were chosen by the development commission for their expertise in world cultural heritage, Wang Yan, an official from the commis-

sion, said. Other participants included journalists and 10 citizens who volunteered to be there.

While many people from outside the capital have expressed opposition to the plan, none were represented at the hearing. Wang explained that was because five of the six sites were administrated by the local government and maintained through local funding.

He added there were no regulations requiring people from out of town to be represented at local hearings.

Nanjing Massacre Remembered

By Zhou Ying

More than 2,500 people gathered in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province on Monday to commemorate the notorious massacre committed by Japanese invaders in the city 67 years ago.

The date of December 13, 1937, when invading Japanese troops entered Nanjing and went on to kill more than 300,000 people, is still associated with bitter memories in many minds.

The commemoration began at 10 am, when a 10-minute alarm wailed over the city to remind people of the tragic past.

Chen Li, a student representative from Nanjing University, read the Nanjing Peace Declaration in front of the Nanjing Memorial Hall of Compatriots Murdered. "Here, we Nanjing's people, are willing to work together with people all over the world for justice, harmony and a better future," Chen said.

Nearly 100 Japanese people also took part in the remembrance, Xinhua reported Tuesday.

Japanese and Chinese monks together rang the memorial hall's bell as more than 3,000 doves were released as symbols of hopes for peace.

"On this special day, I wish more Japanese people would acknowledge the historical truth," one of the Japanese monks said.

A special ceremony was held for survivors of the massacre at the Nanjing Memorial Hall on Sunday morning in which 20 survivors, on behalf of a larger group of 179, received certificates from the Nanjing Massacre Survivors' Association, *Beijing News* said Monday.

"Our investigations have shown that more than 400 survivors are still alive. The 179 acknowledged today were just the first group of them to get certificates," Zhu Chengshan, director of the Nanjing Massacre museum, told the newspaper.

Zhu said that the museum and others had also set up an association to provide assistance to survivors. "The Nanjing government will donate a lot of money to them," he added.

A professor at Japan's Ritsumeikan University said after the ceremony that the Japanese government had the duty of providing compensation for the massacre. "I believe that the only way to maintain self respect is to directly face, not hide from, history," he was quoted as saying.



Twenty of the 400 living massacre survivors took part in Monday's memorial.

Photo by Photocom



Photo by Guo Tielu

Migrants Get Their Money

By Zhou Ying

More than 30 migrant workers from Jiangsu Province came away from a Monday meeting with smiles on their faces and cash in their hands after receiving wages owed them with the help of officials from Beijing's Donghuamen community.

The Donghuamen Community

Office established a special team to help the workers get their wages earlier this month, the *Beijing Morning Post* reported Tuesday.

Since 2002, migrant workers nationwide have received a total of 3 billion yuan in owed backpay thanks to new government efforts, *Beijing Youth Daily* said Wednesday.

"Moreover, 99.3 percent of wag-

es owed migrant workers for 2003 have been paid," Wang Yincheng, spokesman for the Municipal Construction Committee said.

"We plan to launch a series of measures, such as opening legal assistance offices and checking enterprises' records, to put an end to the phenomena of workers being shorted their salaries."

Louvre Comes to Carrefour

By Dong Nan

Until December 20, local people can see treasures from Paris' celebrated Louvre Palace Museum for free without going any further than Haidian District, as 87 exact duplicates of classic sculptures are on show at the Carrefour shopping center in Zhongguancun Plaza. Among the works on display are such masterpieces as the Winged Victory of Samothrace and Venus de Milo.

The informal exhibition is one of the many activities involved in the 2004-2005 Year of French Culture in China, and experts from the National Museum of France will be on hand to introduce the works to visitors.

The sculptures on display are reproductions authorized



When shopping and art collide...

Photo by Chen Bai

and produced by the Louvre itself. The museum's reproduction factory has been operating since 1794, shortly after the Louvre Palace was built, to provide high-quality duplications of its collections to other museums and galleries.

Seeing Stars and Sharks

By Liu Zhaoxi

Adults and kids alike shrieked in delight as sharks, tiger and spiders jumped out from the screen at the four-dimensional theater inside the impressive new wing of the Beijing Planetarium that opened on Sunday.

The design of the new building, which stands beside the planetarium's original, 47-year-old dome, was inspired by theories of astrophysics and was meant to be a temple to the mysteries of the universe, an introduction on the planetarium's website said.

Besides exciting architecture, visitors are treated to lots of high-tech fun at the new facility, including a digital universe theater that runs a three-dimensional simulation of outer space and the four-dimensional shows that include such effects as carefully timed releases of water, odor and air. China's first solar vacuum telescope even allows people to watch solar activity in complete safety.

It took three years and 300 million to build the new wing. More than 3,000 people turned out for its opening, *Beijing Daily Massager* said on Monday.

Honest Cabbie Returns Lost Cash Stash

By Wang Fang

When a bag containing thousands of yuan was put back in his hands just hours after he lost it on Sunday afternoon, a surprised man could express nothing but thanks to an upright taxi driver and local police.

Mr. Zhang, a native of nearby Tangshan, Hebei Province, told *Beijing Youth Daily* he left a bag containing 14,000 yuan in cash in a taxi after he got out at Jingxin Plaza around 1:30 on Sunday.

"I went there with some friends. When I got out of the cab, I tried to give my friend some money for

the fare and ended up forgetting to grab my bag," said Zhang.

He quickly realized his mistake and whirled around to find the taxi had already taken off. Making matters worse, Zhang did not have a receipt for the fare. He decided to call the police for help.

Detective Tian Zhiqiang from the Beijing Police Taxi Management Bureau handled Zhang's call, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported, and assured him officers would start a search for a taxi fitting Zhang's description.

In the meantime, the taxi's driver, Huang Hong, found the small

black leather bag in the back seat when cleaning his car. Out of curiosity, he opened it and was shocked to see all the cash inside.

Huang told *Beijing Youth Daily* that he immediately informed his company about the bag since there was nothing in it identifying its owner.

With the help of the police and the taxi company, Zhang finally got connected to Huang and the two met around 3 pm at the Beijing Police Taxi Management Bureau.

"All the money was still there," Zhang said. "I am so grateful to that taxi driver."

Show Shines Artful Light on Bare Flesh



Photo by Imaginechina

By Zhou Ying

Two years after it was banned, the first Artful Nude Photography Exhibition opened at a provincial calligraphy and painting research institute in Hunan Province last Saturday.

The government's change of heart regarding the show, comprised of 140 photographs chosen by an expert panel from over 1,000 submissions, was a sign of China's changing society, Deng Jin, director of the institute's exhibition department, told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday.

"We failed to get past the censors from the local cultural bureau in 2002 because there was a huge gap between the officials and the original organizers of the show as to what constitutes art. But this time, we had no troubles, we finally made it," Deng said.

"All the pictures on display were carefully checked first by the propaganda department, provincial cultural office and provincial literature and art federation before they were revealed to the public."

The short show, due to wrap up on Saturday, has been drawing more than 1,000 visitors a day. "We are considering taking the show on a road tour around the province," Deng said.

The show's opening has been hailed as a sign that Chinese people's traditional bashfulness about nudity is changing.

"Now we can focus on how to make the exhibition, and nude photography, better, instead of worrying about whether such a show can be held in the first place," Deng said.

Search On for Gansu "UFO"



It came from space... A meteorite found outside Lanzhou this week

Photo by Photocom

By Dong Nan

Hundreds of people in Lanzhou, Gansu Province reported seeing an unidentified flying object, or UFO, streak across the sky on Saturday night. Local police and media have conducted wide searches for what may have

dropped from the air in the area, but nothing conclusive has been found.

Witnesses told the *Lanzhou Morning* newspaper they saw a strange shining object flash overhead around 11:36 pm on Saturday, after which there was the sound of an explosion. Other people within 100 kilometers of Lanzhou said they felt the earth shake at the same time.

One Lanzhou man, surnamed Zhang, said he saw a shining ball with a three-meter-long tail flying west-to-east and heard two thunderous sounds shortly after as he was driving from Lanzhou to neighboring Yongdeng County.

An astronomy professor from the Zijinshan Astronomical Observatory surnamed Tan told the local newspaper that the object must have been a meteoroid entering the Earth's atmosphere.

The local public security department confirmed on Monday that they had received more than 700 reports on the incident. The same day, two small meteorites were discovered in Honggu, a town near Lanzhou, and the nearby towns of Xigu, Yuzhong and Shuichuan all reported signs of meteoroid impacts, though no traces of the space rocks themselves were found.

Tan figured the small rocks must be part of a larger meteor, likely weighing over one ton, that may have crashed into the remote mountains outside the city.

The search for the mysterious visitor continues.

Sharpshooters Set Sights on Violent Crime

By Liu Zhaoxi

A group of 48 policemen from Tianjin are currently going through a one-month boot camp in Beijing on their way to becoming professional marksmen aimed at quelling violent crime.

The officers, aged 22 to 36, will run through courses to hone their shooting posture, proficiency with guns, self-defense skills and psychological strength and take part in simulating situations, such as hostage rescues, before they graduate at the end of the month. The goal is to train snipers able to achieve hit rates of nearly 100 percent with three weapons.

"When selecting trainees, we first considered individuals' interest in guns and how smart they are," training officer Liu Guiliang told *Beijing Youth Daily* on Monday.

One of the participants, who did not give his name, was quoted as saying the training had already made him feel more confident in assuming his duties.

Police snipers have played important roles in handling many dangerous situations in recent years. In October, a sharpshooter shot dead a kidnapper in Foshan, Guangdong Province after an over-10 hour confrontation with police. The young woman taken hostage in the case was rescued.



By Liu Zhaoxi

Are you sick of waiting and fighting the crowds in order to get on a bus or subway train during rush hour? A solution might be at hand in the form of carpool, a new commuting alternative for people in big cities. It's an idea that's already taken off in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Chengdu in the past two years.

Usually, a carpool consists of two or more people with a similar commute pattern riding together in a private vehicle on a regular basis. As crowds and traffic get worse in cities, partly because of the surging number of privately owned cars, people have realized that carpooling is a reliable way to get around, especially for traveling between work and home.

The Internet is the basis for organizing the whole thing. At least two Chinese websites, www.chexing.net and www.shufengche.com, are now serving as a platform for people to set up carpools by posting information such as routes, travel time and contacts. People usually come to arrangements, such as sharing the cost of gas. Chexing.net, which claims to be the first carpool website in China, has set up services for over 30 cities in the country with 150,000 registered members so far.

The idea has prompted a public discussion of issues such as benefits, money involved, possible governmental regulation and safety. To find out more, *Beijing Today* interviewed several carpool users, lawyers, government officials and citizens of the United States, where, like many other developed countries, carpooling has existed for decades and become part of people's lives.

Shi Jian, carpool user in Shanghai: **carpooling increases the utilization efficiency of vehicles**

Carpooling can relieve the burden on public transportation and ease the busy traffic. Meanwhile, increasing the utilization efficiency of vehicles will definitely reduce air pollution.

It is necessary for the govern-

Jump into the Carpool

ment to make some regulations for carpooling. Otherwise, some people may use the idea improperly and cheat or harm passengers. And if the driver and passenger have some disagreement, they need to have regulations to follow in order to settle the dispute. Also, when carpooling becomes more popular, the government ought to take measures like formulating traffic and oil tax policies in favor of carpooling.

Zhang Chunyan, carpool user in Beijing: **safety issue needs attention**

If I were to take a ride with a stranger, I would first try to find out something about them. That way, I would feel safe and choose to take the ride. It's better if the car owner is my neighbor. The government should make some regulations, for both drivers and passengers, to address the safety situation. It might be a good idea to ask community committees to help arrange carpooling in the community. There should be some charge for carpooling. It is convenient and comfortable. You have to pay anyway if you take public transportation. Maybe something like 150 yuan per month would be acceptable. **Xiao Haojie**, carpool user in Chengdu, Sichuan Province: **what happens in case of an accident?**

Offering rides to other peo-

ple does not mean you should have to charge money. It depends. Carpooling is an individual activity of citizens and not easy for the government to regulate. However, it is indeed tricky if an accident occurs. But people can make the responsibility clear by signing contracts or statements.

Wei Guiqin, lawyer at Beijing Huiyuan law firm: **carpooling has some potential problems**

Carpooling is different from taxis and unlicensed taxis. It is not aimed at making a profit, nor does it run according to the needs of the passenger. Besides, carpooling is supposed to have relatively fixed routes and passengers, while taxis do not. So far, there is no law prohibiting carpooling, so its existence is not illegal, but it also lacks legal protection.

There are still some potential problems related to carpooling. For example, if the car owner did not purchase proper insurance, there will be difficulty in settling accidents. Some car owners also charge passengers money, which is illegal. And if carpooling had an impact on public issues, for instance if no-one was taking taxis anymore, laws and regulations would have to be set up to take care of it.

Shen Rongzhang, taxi driver in Beijing: **carpooling could be unlicensed taxis in a disguised form**

If more and more people use carpooling it will have an impact on taxis, since carpooling is cheaper than taking a taxi. Carpooling should only be among people working together who make a deal to share a ride. Otherwise, it is more like an unlicensed taxi service and posting ride share information online is like soliciting business.

Anonymous government official in Beijing: **it's not the time for governmental regulation yet**

Carpooling is something new to me and I think it is still too early to talk about governmental regulation. When it develops into a large scale activity or if some problems develop, the government might consider regulating

it. Otherwise, the government will not set up regulation.

Huang Zhen, official of chexing.com: **carpooling has a bright future**

People living in big cities are most troubled by traffic, and carpooling is a natural development to deal with this. It will grow soundly and I hope the government will support carpooling in the future and that legislation will be established to advance it. **Stephen Greenfield**, American teacher in Dalian: **people may get in trouble for charging money for the ride**

I think the big question is: will people get in trouble for charging money to drive other people from point A to point B. The answer, in the US, is yes. You need a special license to charge money for supplying what is essentially a taxi service. So, if you are charging money for driving anyone around, and you do not have a special license to do this, you have become an illegal taxi driver.

Leah Lohse, student at University of Missouri-Columbia, US: **it's capitalism at work**

Sometimes if two people work at the same large company in a big city and live in the same suburb, they will carpool together without really knowing one another. It's capitalism at work, I guess, whatever anyone can do to save money and yield the greatest return.

Reah Chiu, citizen of Los Angeles, US: **carpooling is encouraged in LA**

Here, they encourage people to carpool in order to limit the amount of traffic on the road. Usually, we have lanes, especially in LA, that allow only cars with more than one passenger to drive in and usually they are faster. We also have organizations that can get people together to carpool. Ride Share is an organization running a website where you can post up your information and share rides. There are really not many restrictions in terms of sharing rides because usually most people know it's at your own risk. If you are to take a ride or give a ride to someone, it's your consent to do so.

20 years later – a condition called dormancy that doctors do not understand.

"Life is too short to be angry. I learned that. I could've died that morning, so I wanted to finish out life being happy, not being angry."

Said **Missy Jenkins**, who was hit in the shoulder by a bullet that spiraled into her spinal cord, paralyzing her from the waist down in a 1997 school shooting in Evansville, Indiana. Now 22, Jenkins graduated Saturday from Murray State University in Kentucky with a degree in social work and a desire to work with teens to prevent similar shootings from happening. (Edited by Qiu Lin)

Commentary

Tackling the Roots of Government Corruption

By Shida Zhu

The sentencing of a former Hubei provincial Party secretary and governor for a prison term of 11 years for accepting bribes has recently received wide public attention as it has revealed a network of corrupt officials who are connected to each other in a most complicated tie of official liaisons.

Zhang Guoguang was the Shenyang municipal Party secretary and Liaoning provincial Party deputy secretary before he served as the Hubei Party secretary. While he worked in Shenyang, Liaoning province from 1989 to 1999, he accepted bribes totaling 572,000 yuan by helping Shenyang Shengfa Industrial Group get bank loans and engineering contracts and promoting subordinates to higher official posts.

Zhang masterminded the promotion of Mu Suixin, a former Shenyang mayor, and Ma Xiangdong, a former vice-mayor of the city, who were found to be corrupt three years ago. When Zhang held sway in Liaoning and Shenyang, official posts were a commodity for sale on the market. This gave rise to an intertwined tie of relationships. Promoted by Zhang with a bribe, Mu went to promote subordinates of his own to higher official posts on the strength of bribes. He sold the positions of the chief of tobacco bureau and the deputy directorship of the general office of the municipal government respectively to Zhou Wei and Chi Ruoyan. The corrupt ring of officials involved municipal bureau chiefs of finance, taxation, land, pricing, tobacco and state-owned assets, president of the court and chief of the procuratorate, covering so many divisions of social endeavor.

The figure of 572,000 yuan of bribes involved in Zhang Guogang's case may seem paltry compared with Cheng Kejie, the former governor of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, who accepted a bribe of 41 million yuan, and Hu Changqing, the former deputy governor of Jiangxi province, who accepted a bribe of more than 5 million yuan. However, Zhang's case exposes a problem far more serious than just his own activity: the problems of selling official positions as commodities. If such practice goes unchecked, corruption opens the door for more corrupt officials and the whole situation becomes worse.

Another case in point is Wang Huaizhong, the former

deputy governor of Anhui province. His case also involved a ring of corrupt officials, including the mayor of Fuyang, the municipal Party organizational and propaganda chiefs, the municipal planning commission chairman and the secretary of the municipal Party committee. While his lieutenants offered 50,000 yuan each, Wang Huaizhong offered as a gift 200,000 yuan to a senior leader at a higher level on the occasion of the wedding of the latter's son. Wang had a famous saying: "So long as you make a success of government work, you will be able to be promoted. The key is not to let the commoners see your success, but the leaders." There is a mobile phone short message satirizing Wang's philosophy on officialdom: "An institution is like a big tree where many monkeys perch. When you look up, you see all the buttocks. When you look down, you see all the smiling faces." The corrupt officials like Wang Huaizhong believe that their fate and official career are all in the hands of their superiors. They have to curry favor with their superiors and their subordinates follow suit. This practice is in full compliance with the ideas of those corrupt officials who worship the exclusive role of wealth and forget their obligations to society at large. This is the key secret of government corruption and a tragedy of traditional governance.

The central government has made up its mind to tackle government corruption and make it part of its efforts to set up a clean government in its endeavor to build a society with comfortable living standards for the people. To counter a tendency of government corruption, China has introduced in its selection of civil officials a series of ideas such as making it public before official appointments are settled and expanding the scope of direct election of public officials. There will be more than 6,000 official positions at all levels open to public competition next year. It proves it is only by dramatically reforming the traditional practice of cadre selection and appointment and empowering the general public in checking, selecting and dismissing public officials that the rotten philosophy held by the likes of Zhang Guoguang and Wang Huaizhong will be fundamentally shaken, and that the tragedy of government corruption will be avoided.



Zhang Guoguang

Photo by Photocom



Cheng Kejie

Soundbites

"Where are the Americans? Where are the Americans?"

Lying in hospital beds in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, **wounded US consulate workers** on Tuesday recalled an attack that killed nine, injured at least 10 and showed America's continued vulnerability to terrorist groups capable of conducting sophisticated surveillance, even on the most heavily guarded sites.

"He was like a mentor, like a brother to me, so when something like that happens, you're upset, you're hurt."

Kobe Bryant said Sunday night before the Los Angeles Lakers played the Orlando Magic, accusing Karl Malone of making a pass at his wife at a game. Malone,

who has been recuperating from knee surgery on his right knee for three months, wasn't ready to play. Malone, the second-leading scorer in NBA history, opted out of his \$1.65 million contract following last season, making him a free agent. Despite his obvious anger toward Malone, Bryant said he would be able to separate his personal feelings if Malone should rejoin the Lakers.

"Movie-goers like their movie stars all in one place. It's like one-stop shopping for all the top stars in Hollywood."

Paul Dergarabedian, president of the US box-office tracker Exhibitor Relations, commenting on the \$40.9 million debut box-office success of "Ocean's

Twelve" which reunites director Steven Soderbergh with a dream cast lead by George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Julia Roberts and Andy Garcia. Joining them this time was Catherine Zeta-Jones, adding to the sequel's star power.

"Dormancy is a mysterious phenomenon that occurs in certain types of cancer."

Said **Dr. Jonathan Uh**, from the University of Texas Southwestern at Dallas, who led the study that found one third of 36 former breast cancer patients to have tumor cells in their blood; this showed that patients who had undergone mastectomies 20 years before might have a 20 percent cancer recurrence rate



"Easy money" resulted in widespread AIDS in Henan Province

Photos by Photocom

Pioneering Doctor Counts Cost of AIDS in Henan



Guo Yunsheng, an AIDS patient in Xincai County, with his two children. His wife died of AIDS last year.

By Wang Fang

A Beijing doctor last week published a ground breaking 22-page report on the Henan AIDS scandal after five years of his own personal research, visiting hundreds of AIDS-ravaged villages, investigating local blood donation centers and interviewing HIV and AIDS patients.

Dr Zhang urged his scientific estimate of 300,000 HIV infections in Henan now be used as a reference for controlling the damage of AIDS and HIV in the province. "We need to face that number and think out ideas about how to fight AIDS and HIV without wasting any more time on blaming people or deciding who should take the fall," he said.

Dr Zhang Ke, of Beijing You'an Hospital, a hospital which specializes in infectious diseases especially AIDS, blamed the problem on the booming plasma economy of the 1990s.

Between 1992 and 1996, there were at any time anything between 80-287 official blood donor centers in the province. In 1996, the centers were officially banned.

The profits of plasma are tempting. Extracted from blood in a centrifuge, plasma can be manufactured into lucrative products including albumin, globulin and blood platelets. For example, *Henan Health Newspaper* reported on September 8, 1992 that the provincial health department had signed a 20-million yuan contract with the provincial Red Cross blood donation center to produce 1,000 kilograms of albumin and 250 kilograms of globulin in one year.

Easy money

There was once a ditty among the plasma sellers – mostly peasants – "50 yuan easy money for spreading your arm and making a fist". Some farmers even built new houses on the money made from selling their plasma.

Liu Shihang and Leng Changjin, of Dancheng County, organized 20-30 villagers to go on a lucrative tour of the province's blood donor centers selling their plasma.

Illegal donor centers spread rapidly. In Weishi County, there were 20-30 such centers to the three official ones.

"At that time, the most crowded places in these counties were blood donor centers."

Infection method

Dr Zhang found that injecting blood corpuscles back into the body was the means by which most farmers became infected with HIV.

"These blood centers did not accept blood corpuscles, which is about one third of the volume of the blood sold by the farmers."

What to do with all the unwanted blood was a constant problem for these centers.

Staff at blood centers had the idea of mixing blood corpuscles of the same type, cleansing and injecting them back into donors. The blood sellers were told that this could cure anaemia. In fact, the injections did not cure anaemia because the half life of the blood corpuscles is too short. What the injections did, very effectively, was spread HIV.

HIV population

In July 1999, Dr Zhang was startled to

hear from one of his patients that the HIV-infected population in Henan Province was out of control. At the end of September, Dr Zhang got on the train to Xincai County, Henan Province to see for himself what was being denied everywhere else. He never imagined that visit was the beginning of an exhaustive five-year investigation of HIV in Henan.

Dr Zhang adopted a sample investigation based on the number of blood centers and hospitals from 1994 to 1996, when HIV infections began to spread in Henan.

He visited 10 counties in Nanyang Prefecture including Xincai County, Shenqiu County, Dancheng County, Weishi County, Sui County and Zhecheng County and found 31 percent of blood donors had HIV in these counties.

The other factors that featured in his calculations were as follows:

A) How many seats to each blood center? Dr Zhang found it averaged about 50;

B) How long did it take to draw the blood? Dr Zhang's patients told him the minimum time was 30 minutes and the longest about an hour. He took the average as an hour;

C) How many days were the centers open? This averaged 600 days by excluding holidays;

D) What were the business hours? Patients told him the centers normally opened 10 hours or longer. He took the average as 10 hours;

E) How many times did the same seller go back to the center? Dr Zhang's investigation suggested that average was 100 times.

The formula: $A \times B \times C \div (D \times E)$ was used to calculate how many farmers donated plasma from 1994 to 1996. The result was 3,000 people. Since the average percentage of HIV infections among blood donors was 31 percent, the number of HIV infections in each blood donor center from 1994 to 1996 can be estimated to be 930 ($3,000 \times 31\%$).

Taking the minimum of 80 centers between 1992-1996, the HIV-infected population would be about 70,000. Taking the maximum of 287, the HIV-infected population would be about 270,000. The median falls around 170,000. But Dr Zhang said the real number of HIV infections in Henan from 1994-1996 should be estimated as about 300,000 by taking into account illegal centers.

Survey information:

Dr Zhang Ke from Beijing You'an Hospital carried out a five-year personal investigation (1999-2004) on the HIV-infected population in Henan Province. His investigation is based on 11,057 AIDS patients.



An AIDS cemetery in Xincai County

Survey of the Overworked and Underappreciated

By Zhou Ying

One in eight employees feel burned out by their job, according to a survey released on December 6 by the China Human Resources Development Network.

The survey found 70% of participants felt slightly burned out, 39.2% seriously and 13% extremely. Burnout is defined by a loss of desire to work and a feeling of being trapped in a no-win situation. No one is immune. Any person, in any profession, at any level, can become a victim of job burnout.

The survey found:

- 37.2% of male participants and 41.4% of female participants feel they are suffering from some form of burnout.

- Participants with a bachelor's degree are more likely to feel burned out: 68.8 percent, while master's graduates numbered 35.76%.

- People with less than four years' work experience have more access to job burnout.

- 46.4% of officials feel they are suffering some form of burnout, higher than those who worked in state companies and multinationals.

- Regionally speaking, Tianjin topped the burnout index (48.48%).

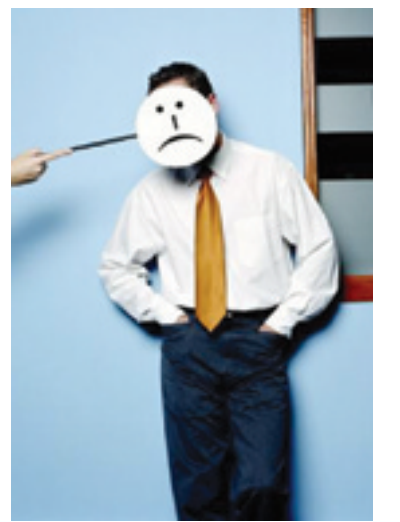
- The higher the position, the less the burnout. Only 26.1% of high-level managers felt burned out, compared to 48.2% of ordinary employees.

Luo Daping, chief editor of the Network, said 76.6% of the people who felt burned out complained that what they have got out of their work did not equal what they had put in in terms of physical and emotional commitment.

"Therefore, some companies should set up a management system to make staff love their job and feel excited about their careers," he said.

Survey information

The survey was conducted by a research group of the China Human Resources Development Network and Sina network, based on an online questionnaire involving 4,000 people in 12 Chinese cities.



First Electronic Commerce Report Released

By Zhou Ying

Less than one third of large or medium-sized companies have established e-commerce, according to the first electronic commerce report released last Monday.

The report also found "61.8 percent of netizens in China connect to the internet by dial-up service, and only 21.9 percent of them use Broadband. Only 21 percent have online shopping experience." China's total number of surfers ranks second in the world, the report said.

Survey information:

Released by the Ministry of Commerce, the China Electronic Commerce Association and the University of International Business and Economics, the report is the first issued by the government concerning Chinese electronic commerce.

By Sun Yongjian

A bitter legal battle is brewing over the dregs of China's top soft drinks brand.

Founded in 1984, the once-mighty Jianlibao Group has been struggling ever since the fall of former chairman Li Jingwei.

Once Forbes Magazine's 32nd richest man in China, Li lost his seat at the National People's Congress in October 2002 over allegations he embezzled more than three million yuan in state assets. Since early 2004, the Guangdong-based drink-maker has become increasingly mired in fiscal crisis, with production nearly stopped, employees going unpaid for nearly two months, sales plummeting and debts spiraling, *Beijing Today* reported on November 19.

It seemed a solution was at hand when two Beijing companies bought 91.1 percent of the Sanshui district, Foshan City company on November 16. But in a bizarre twist, the business leaders involved in the buyout returned to the capital city last week complaining that the Sanshui district government has forceably removed them from effective control over their own company.

The Sanshui government, which owns only 8.9 percent of the company stock, seized control of the company on December 7, Qu Bing, public relations director of Huizhong Tianheng, told *Beijing Today* on Monday. "The company restored production starting Monday," Huang Jiehua, the news secretary of Sanshui district government told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday.

Lightning raid

Huizhong Tianheng Investment and Hengtai Science & Technology Development had negotiated with the former board of Jianlibao and signed the con-

Fizz Fight

Local government kicks out Beijing buyers of Jianlibao



Before: Li Zhida celebrates the deal struck on November 16.

Photo by photocome

tract on November 16. The buy was billed a "lightning purchase" by some domestic newspapers including *Beijing News* as it took just one month to seal the deal.

Li Zhida, president of Huizhongtianheng, had replaced the entire leadership of Jianlibao board, according to the *Beijing Today* report.

The new board claims it had to quit the company because the Sanshui district government took over the company by force.

"All the new board members, including Li Zhida, have come back to Beijing," said Qu. "We received a sudden notice from Sanshui district government that the water and electricity supplies

"We are so confused! What on earth has taken place?"
—Li Zhida



After: Li Zhida wonders what happened to the deal struck on November 16.

Photo by Chen Xiaohong

were to be cut off on December 6 as we prepared for production. We are so confused! What on earth has taken place?"

A group led by Sanshui district government chief Song Deping then came to the company on the afternoon of the same day and convened a meeting. Song announced that the government was taking over the company. A list of names was hung on the wall, which included all the new

board members from Huizhong Tianheng. People on the list were forbidden to enter the company, Qu said.

"But they refused to offer us any official effective notice, although we demanded one," Qu said.

All of the Jianlibao accounts, as well as those of its subsidiaries, were frozen by Sanshui district government, and the official seals were confiscated, Qu said. "But the equity transfer between the old and new boards hadn't been finished," Qu said.

Staff confused

"The workers are all confused. What has happened? We are asking the question every day, but nobody is willing to give us an answer," Cheng Botao, former director of the administration office of the board who is still employed by the new company, revealed to *Beijing Today* on Monday. "We are working every day, but we are not sure whether our jobs can be kept or not."

Qu's version of events was disputed by Song Deping. "What we are doing is in order to rescue the Jianlibao brand, in line with the request of the higher level," Song told *Beijing Youth Daily* on December 10.

He refused to indicate what was meant by "the higher level". The government had simply restored production on Monday afternoon, Huang Jiehua told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday. "But the claim 'we forced our way in to take over the company' is contentious. We just sent a group of staff into the company to help restore production."

A new sign was installed at the company gate on December 12 with the name "Jianlibao Trading Co. Ltd. of Sanshui District, Foshan City", according to a report of *Beijing News* on December 14. It seems Sanshui district government's actions were backed by Foshan city government as leaders of both governments appeared in the company on December 12, according to a *Beijing News* report.

Three months' backpay, totaling 30 million yuan was issued to 5,000 employees on December 12, the report said.

Some domestic newspapers have suggested there might be a conspiracy between Li Zhida and Zhang Hai, the former chairman of Jianlibao, according to a report of the *21st Century Business Herald* on December 15. A document written by a Jianlibao insider who declined to give his name, had accused Zhang Hai of appropriating several hundred million yuan, the report said.

"Some market rumors say that Li Zhida and Zhang Hai are willing to trap Jianlibao into a dilemma after Li took over the company. Thus, to rescue the company, Sanshui district government was forced to take over."

Zhang Hai refused to com-

ment, according to the report.

Laws broken?

"We have decided to file a lawsuit at the local court in Guangdong Province against the Sanshui district government because Sanshui district government has violated State corporate law," Qu Bing told *Beijing Today* on Monday.

"What the Sanshui district government has done is completely out of the realm of my expectations," Li Zhida, the new board chairman told Sina.com on December 10. "I can't believe that the local government is so unreasonable. We were busy receiving sales agents and dealing with their demands for debt repayment from the first day we entered the company, as well as issues of salary repayments, production restoration and so on."

An editorial in *Beijing Youth Daily* on December 13 stated: "There is no doubt that the Sanshui district government has violated State law. Sanshui district government owns just 8.9 percent of company stock, but the two Beijing companies own 91.1 percent."

"How can a small shareholder drive out the major shareholders and force their way in to take over the company? How can a small shareholder freeze the company's accounts without any legal and officially effective notice?"

"It looks like an elephant has been swallowed by a snake."

The editorial alleged an important principle was at stake: "As stockholders of Jianlibao, the two Beijing companies and Sanshui district government are equal in the eyes of the law. If the government abuses the public right to deal with economic disputes, it will harm the government's reputation and destroy the principle of equality in a market economy." Not everyone agrees.

Hong Daode, a professor of China Politics and Law University, told *Beijing Today* the issue was how many seats the Sanshui district government had on the Jianlibao board.

"If it has a majority interest, then the government is granted the right to decide equity allocation. What they have done would then not have violated the law, even if they own a small share of the stock. But this matter should be decided by the company's constitution."

Neither Huizhong Tianheng nor Sanshui district government was willing to reveal the company's constitution to *Beijing Today*.

Refused calls

Beijing Today failed in contacting Song Deping, because he refused to accept telephone calls. The Sanshui district government press conference, scheduled for Monday, has been postponed again and again. Qu Bing told *Beijing Today* that his company will not give up on Jianlibao.

Fishing Boats in Hot Water

Peru Navy draws net around illegal Chinese operation

By Dong Nan

The Peruvian Navy detained nine Chinese fishing vessels with a crew of 219 for illegally fishing within Peru's territorial waters on November 19. Twenty days later, the nine vessels were set free after their owner paid a \$0.6 million fine.

Largest action

The Peruvian navy employed two submarines, three destroyers and several military helicopters to conduct a search for foreign vessels fishing illegally within its 200 nautical-mile waters. After a seven-hour search, the navy found and detained nine vessels, all from China.

Eight of the nine vessels were from the China National Fisheries Group. Of them, five came from the Group's Yantan, Shandong branch, Yantai Marine Fisheries Corporation, two from its Overseas Corporation based in Fiji, and one from its Zhoushan Marine Fisheries Corporation, Zhejiang. The rest belonged to a fisheries corporation in Zhoushan that would not publish its name. They carried a combined cargo of about 690 tons of squid.

"This is the largest action to catch illegal fishing within Peru's marine limits," said Admiral Jose Noriega to Peruvian media. The nine vessels were sent to the nearest port, Huarney in Ancash Province of Peru. The Chinese vessels on November 21, were sent 500 nautical miles from Huarney to Callao Port, near Lima, under navy escort. After that, all 219 crew members were not permitted to leave their cabins.

'A warning'

"We hope this action will act as a warning to those foreign vessels that fish along the border of Peru's marine limits," said Peru's Production Minister Alfonso Velasquez at a press conference on November 22.

He said the action had been a long time coming as the navy had found foreign fishing vessels in Peruvian territorial waters continuously over the last

two months. The navy had confirmed the target areas for the action two weeks earlier.

"According to satellite photos, there are usually about 100 foreign fishing vessels gathered on the border of Peruvian territorial waters," said Velasquez. "It seems that they had got used to passing in and out of the border at night. This time, the Peru Navy action restored order there."

He said during the action, some Chinese crew members had unsuccessfully tried to cut the tow cable linking their vessel with the navy ship. There were no casualties.

Zhao Tiesheng, consul of the China embassy in Peru told *Beijing Today* that Peruvian authorities had confirmed to the Chinese embassy that the action was focused on all vessels that illegally fished in Peru's territorial waters, not on Chinese fishing vessels specifically.

According to Zhao Guoqiang, the Xinhua reporter in Lima, there are about 100 Chinese fishing vessels gathered around the high seas next to Peru's territorial waters, mainly looking for 20-30 kilogram squids. There are also vessels from Columbia, Ecuador, Chile, Peru, Japan and South Korea. Chinese vessels began to fish this area from 2001. Fishing is usually done at night as spotlights on the sea attract the squids to the nets. During the course of a pursuit, it might be possible for vessels to cross the border, he said.

Zhao Tiesheng said according to international law, coastal countries in South America such as Peru, Chile and Argentina have the exclusive rights to economic development including fishing and oil exploitation in the seas 200 nautical miles from their coastline.

Zhao said Peru in fact allowed foreign fishing vessels to enter its territory as long as they paid for identification by the Peru Ministry of Production. Many Japanese and South Korean vessels had been through this procedure and were permit-

ted to enter. As yet, no Chinese corporation had done this. This year, Peru began warning other countries.

Peru in October showed satellite photos to the Chinese embassy as a warning, and the embassy informed them that the fishing companies would pay attention. But some still continued, despite the warning, according to Zhao.

Freed

Zhao told *Beijing Today* that during the Peruvian investigation, captains of the Chinese fishing vessels explained they did not enter Peruvian territorial waters on purpose or have the intention of defying Peru's sovereignty. They said they had crossed the border because of problems such as the inaccuracy of nautical charts. Peru accepted their arguments and decided that after paying \$0.6 million in fines, those vessels could return to the high seas.

The fines were paid on December 10 and the vessels began to leave this week. Zhao told *Beijing Today* that all the crew agreed they had received good treatment from the Peruvian Navy and did not have any health problems as they left port.

The confiscated 690 tons of squid will go up for auction. Since there are no processing factories in Peru, the most likely buyer would be a Chinese fishing company.

Zhao Guoqiang, the Xinhua reporter managed to interview the 21 crew on board the vessel of the Yantai Marine Fisheries Corporation during their detention on November 29. They told the reporter they had been away from home for one year. They had called their families after they were detained and had no worries about their safety.

All nine vessels were legal with identification for fishing on the high seas, according to the reporter. Most of the crew were local peasants and fishermen recruited by those corporations. They had a formal contract with those corporations and the whole

crew could make 600 yuan on one ton of squid. Typically, they could earn 2,000 yuan a month. But this time, they could not get any payment.

"None of the crew, including their captains, could speak English or Spanish," Zhao Tiesheng told *Beijing Today*. "And this made for much trouble in trying to communicate with the Peruvian authorities and defending themselves."

Measures to take

This is not the first time a Chinese fishing vessel has got into trouble in foreign territorial waters in recent years. In 2004, two fishing vessels of Hainan Provinces were detained by the Philippines in January and a factory ship was detained by Russia in September.

The headquarters of the China National Fisheries Group refused to talk to *Beijing Today*. However, Zhao Tiesheng told *Beijing Today* that they had promised the embassy they had learned their lesson.

This news shocked the provincial government of Shandong Province. Ma, an official of Shandong Marine and Fisheries Bureau who refused to give his full name, told *Beijing Today* that in recent years, many Shandong vessels had got into trouble in the high seas or in foreign waters and of course caused considerable economic losses. This time, five out of the nine detained vessels came from Shandong and this really captured the attention of the bureau.

"This might be because more and more Chinese fishing vessels have been sailing outside of the country's waters this century, and most of the crew are not qualified enough to deal with the complicated situation when communicating with foreign people," he said.

He said the bureau planned to take three years to train all crew and managers involved with ocean-going fisheries in the province, giving them courses on international law, foreign languages and basic foreign affairs knowledge.

Urban Frenzy

Beijing Today meets a man who thinks the first step in China's city planning education should be an apology from architect Rem Koolhaas

By Gareth George

An imposing black wood desk is littered with wooden mushrooms, padded cushions. A medal from the university of Chicago rests beside a spectrum of magic markers, while Professor Kongjian Yu sits and talks about the biggest turning point in Chinese history since May 4th 1919. Placing his tea cup precariously between stacks of printed paper and a couple of laptop computers, Prof. Yu tells me that the time is now. Yu believes that, once again, China is experiencing a crisis of national-cultural identity. The issue is the relationship between the people and their homeland.

Having received his doctorate from Harvard's Graduate School of Design in 1995, Yu spent two years practising in Los Angeles with the SWA Group, before returning to China. As well as founding the Graduate School of Landscape Architecture at Peking University, Yu is also founder and President of Turenscape, the largest landscape and urban design company in China. And he finds much about Beijing's landscape to trouble him.

Professor Yu believes that Beijing is in the process of a "city beautiful" movement – a term first used to describe The Chicago Exhibition of 1893 – and that Beijing's urbanization mirrors events in North America a century ago. Like China today, the US became a rich nation "overnight", and wanted to demonstrate this to the world. "They bought things from Europe, imported art, exported exhibitions to show off their wealth. And they looked at what they had seen as powerful – the great imperial European cities – and they mimicked them."

Today China wants to show the world its strength, its power. "Here landscape, architecture and the urban environment become the tools to show off – like a peacock. When you dress up you try to show off your identity. Your values. Your aesthetic taste."

In his rapid, easy manner, Yu tells how America finally realized that the city beautiful movement was costing huge sums while creating a few pretty buildings and a lot of social problems. Theorists began to talk of a "vernacular landscape" – one that would reflect the true native identity. But this was almost 80 years later. And the process is ongoing. Yu feels that China is repeating the same mistakes and failing to learn the lessons of the past, "The identity of today's Chinese is not yet found," he adds.

Yu sees three distinct identities struggling for space in Beijing today. The first is the classical European style, which the Americans also copied. This romantic style comes mainly from France, Italy and England. "The style of Kings – imperial, foreboding and outdated," he says. The second is the "modern" style. "China is a rapidly modernizing country, so we want to reflect this. We look to what we think is modern – New York, the big American cities. And that is modern, but it's modern imperialism. The image of a modern capitalist society, with palaces for the capitalist emperors. It reflects America, but not China. Koolhaas' CCTV building falls into this category. Or rather, a Chinese feudalist emperor in a modern dress."

Thirdly, as China becomes a great nation on a global scale, many look to reimpose the grandeur of the past. "We have 5,000 years of history. Many want to rebuild the imperial image of China – that's why so many buildings feature marble and dragons. This has happened before with ancient nations that have seen a city beautiful

movement – Italy and Germany in the 1930s tried to recapture old glories for a new age." And none of these three schools represent what Yu sees as "the true identity of the modern Chinese."

The problem with the city beautiful movement is that it is interested in cosmetic form over function – great buildings at the expense of a well functioning city.

In his keynote speech to the Beijing Architecture Biennale, Professor Alexander Garvin of Yale University and author of *The American City: What Works, What Doesn't*, stated that China is far from the first nation to fall into this trap. "When it comes to great city building, the solution is planning. The reason successes are so often overlooked is because when a problem is solved it's forgotten," he says. Good planning, he adds, is the key ingredient to a city's "safety, utility and quality of life."

Most major nations have experienced planning disasters. And now they're spending big to correct them. But China comes to the table with a blank slate, and yet while Europe and even the US are looking to more efficient forms of public transport to improve quality of life and limit



'The famous Western architects – Koolhaas, Andrews – have to make a decision. They must know that a building is inappropriate for China, but they also must come up with the most outrageous design or they won't win the contract. So they are asked to choose – money and fame or a responsible attitude.'

'We can't mimic others, because we have a different climate and lifestyle to New York or Europe. We have a different culture and should express it. Even a different sense of colour.'



Kongjian Yu in his office

Photos by Xiang Li

pollution, China is embracing the car. "20 years ago we had a very green transport system, with excellent cycle paths. Now we combat traffic problems by building wider roads, so we have not one lane jams, but four or five lane ones," says Professor Yu.

50 years ago, America and Europe were channelizing their rivers. Now they are spending millions to dig them back up, while China begins to channelize hers. "There are no natural rivers in Beijing now, while the West is finding that natural rivers, far from being a waste of space, can contribute to the success of local business, and encourage tourism. This is the ecological approach." Yu talks about the "Big Dig Project" in Boston for which he won an urban design award, with a local design firm in 2002. "It was simple, we dug down and put part of the highway underground, leaving the open air streets for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians. For daily use. This kind of project is worth imitating."

Rather than lay the blame with specific individuals, Professor Yu believes that the system has evolved in a way that makes coherent planning difficult. "Right now half of China's richest people make their money from the land. The process of urbanization, where people can draw a line and say 'this land is developable, and therefore saleable,' means that a lot of people are becoming hugely wealthy overnight." Says Yu, "so these people get this huge profit, become rich and powerful, then they don't know how to spend it. So each of them wants to build the highest, most expensive building. A luxury plaza, a central street – just to have a beautiful thing without considering its function. Or how the city will work."

Chinese cities operate a zoning system, similar to that of the old USSR and the USA. And the US has experienced the problems that China is now seeing. Land is sold according

to a plan, within defined "lines". One area will be sold as a real estate zone, the next a commercial zone. So the city emerges piece by piece, with little consideration for the organic unit. The potential is for a city that favours the car over green transport and thus becomes polluted. And a city that segregates rich and poor areas into zones that may be separated by just a retail area.

Elsewhere in the world, this has led to ugly, forgotten districts which promote only poverty and social unrest. "China needs an intellectual movement to go forward," says Yu. "We need to make the decision process more scientific and more democratic."

Yu doesn't believe that the city authorities are yet receiving adequate advice, from their own people or from the foreign architects they bring in. "The people with power have an idea of what they want; a grand building, a unique symbol. This might not be the best thing for the city, but then the famous Western architects – Koolhaas, Andrews – have to make a decision. They must know that a building is inappropriate for China, but they also must come up with the most outrageous design or they won't win the contract. So they are asked to choose – money and fame or a responsible attitude."

"At this stage what China really needs is education." Yu says, "We don't yet have a modern identity. We need to understand what's good and bad, what's imperialistic and what's capitalist. What is for the 'upstart nation' and what is for the people. We need to know the difference between formal modernism and spiritual modernism. The Western architects should be coming here as teachers, not just to take the money...especially the big ones, like Koolhaas. They should be setting an example of what is suitable for this nation."

To this effect, Yu has presented ideas to 600 mayors as part of this education.

But with the big contracts still going to companies from overseas, the tide has not yet turned. Work began in October on the new CCTV building designed by Rem Koolhaas and Yu uses this to illustrate all that he feels is wrong with the city beautiful movement. "It's formally modern, but spiritually imperialistic...a very capitalist building. A more functional building could have been built for a tenth of the cost, and with billions here in China without access to formal schooling this is against democracy and the scientific way. Instead of using the most simple method to solve a problem, the CCTV building is a misuse of technology to show off."

Professor Yu believes that the first step in China's education should be an apology from Koolhaas. "Of course, Koolhaas was asked to build this, and I don't want to criticize his talent – if he hadn't taken the contract, maybe some worse architect would have. But when Einstein developed nuclear power, he sent out a message when he admitted his regret. I would like to see Koolhaas set this example to other architects and planners in China and admit the building is unsuitable for Beijing."

With education, Yu believes that China will come to see its own path. "We can't mimic others, because we have a different climate and lifestyle to New York or Europe. We have a different culture and should express it. Even a different sense of colour. Tomorrow, we will have the self confidence to express ourselves. Hopefully before the destruction of the unique identity of this place and our people."

And people are starting to listen. Yu has received invitations from many real estate developers to design projects all over the country, and although his single-minded nature has meant that these projects have not always been 100 percent successful, it also means he won't give up.



Photo by Li Shuzhuan

Pick up a Paintbrush

By Ray

On a sunny afternoon last weekend, Club Vibes in the 798 art center at Dashanzi was crowded with 30 people of different nationalities and professional backgrounds painting everything and anything that came to mind. Live music was provided by a pianist, and passers-by walked in with curiosity, thinking they had intruded into a professional art studio. They were mistaken. They had just walked into paintMOB.

Although Dashanzi Art District is known for housing professional artists and their art galleries, there is now a chance for you to set up your own palette on weekends there. PaintMOB provides a space for anyone who simply wants to paint. As part of the relaxed atmosphere, you can have a drink or dance to live music at the same time. Between 11 am - 5pm, people who have signed up for the event walk in and start painting. Some come with friends, and some just on their own.

Organizer Wee-lim Bay came up with the idea of paintMOB with two like-minded friends. "Art is not necessarily competitive and not always profit-making. It is simply a means to express oneself, and a powerful communicative tool that can bring people together, across cultures, past and present. Art can be elitist and many see it as something that is done only by those who are 'talented'. That keeps many people away from this important means of expression," Bay said.

Bay hails from Singapore and holds down a full time job in Beijing. Although not trained as a professional artist, she dabbles in painting during her free time. How does she find the time and energy to hold non-profit events like paintMOB? "It is good to see people find happiness in putting colors on canvas and creating something that is beautiful in their own eyes," she said.

Beijing Today had the chance to speak to some of the painters at the event. A gentleman who preferred to remain anonymous heard about paintMOB from a friend. As a real estate professional, this was his first visit to paintMOB and his first attempt at painting. "Given the opportunity, I will definitely be back; this is a great way to relax."

Beijing Today also spoke to Canadian-Chinese Eli Chan, who was having a small painting party with her friends. A student of the Chinese language in Beijing, she holds fond memories of a similar art space in Hong Kong. "Since coming to Beijing I've been looking for an art space like this in Beijing. This is my second paintMOB. It's a wonderful space and I don't even have to be good at drawing!" As we were speaking, the live piano music was reaching a climax. Eli commented, "The last time we were here, there was a DJ and a live French guitar player!"

Here we also see a magazine editor engrossed in her colorful creation, and model Tracy G, who was busy creating an African forest on her canvas. "Everyone is happy in here. I am happy, my friends are happy, and that is great," says Tracy G.

Meanwhile, Amy, co-organizer of paintMOB, is picking out paintbrushes for another newcomer. She was also giving some pointers on using acrylic paint, which is the main medium used at paintMOB, though others will be available soon. Amy intends to bring in some clay for participants who want to get their hands dirty.

There are also a few people at the bar, just having a drink. Some occasionally take a walk around and see what the painters are doing. Simply enjoying the ambience was the key for these people. This is certainly a different way to enjoy art. It's the way PaintMOB attracts people from all walks of life - IT engineers, diplomats, property managers, and architects among others - many of whom have never picked up a paint brush before. There is a little "how-to" sheet provided for newcomers so they aren't too much in the dark, and the results can be amazing. It might be the beginning of something big. At the moment it's a monthly event. Reservations are needed to take part. For more information, please email paintmob@hotmail.com.

Join the Lomos



By Sabu Zhang

Digital cameras? Pah! A new trend, born in Russia and now sweeping the world, is taking photography away from boring brands, tech and consumerism and back to its roots. It's all based on the simple design of the Russian-made, 35mm LOMO Kompakt Automat (LC-A). The camera is available in various different forms of widely varying quality, but it's not just a camera you're buying; it's a principal, which is to ignore all the rules and just take pictures spontaneously. This idea seems to have touched a nerve, and "Lomography" is now an international movement. Chinese Lomographers have joined in this global scene and are eager to show their own visual experience.

What is Lomography?

The Lomographic Society was founded 1992 in Vienna, by a couple of Austrian students who discovered the Russian 35mm LOMO LC-A camera and used it to create a new form of photography, which they called Lomography. The headquarters in Vienna started as an art project, organizing exhibitions, parties and events which soon attracted thousands of participants. Nowadays the Lomographic Society has a worldwide network spreading the word around the globe, through exhibitions and events. The recent Lomography World Congress held in Beijing during June and July ignited the passion of Chinese Lomographers and attracted more people to this new unfettered art form.

Lomography emphasizes shoot-from-the-hip photography. Over-saturated colors, lens distortions, and exposure defects are used to produce artistic, abstract effects and are prized by practitioners. The main goals of Lomography are not perfect arrange-

ment, quality or common rules of professional photography, but spontaneous shooting in everyday life, with sometimes surprising results.

Typically Lomo cameras are low-fidelity, inexpensively constructed items. Some of them have multiple lenses (Supersampler, Actionsampler and Pop 9), colored flashes (Colorsplash) and several are well known for their extreme optical distortions (Horizon) or even light leaks (Holga). The price ranges from US\$40 to around \$350.

The idea of Lomography is not supposed to interrupt life, but be a part of it. It goes beyond classical and professional photography and has created its own philosophy - "Don't think, just shoot". Rather than seek to compose something, seek the composition already in front of the lens.

It's the spontaneity, stupid

The Lomography credo encourages everybody to shoot spontaneously, closely, randomly and ubiquitously. That's the main reason why Lomographers adore the little gadget so much. They take the plastic little cameras everywhere and use them at any time because they are small and able to shoot in low light. Take a look on lomography.com and you'll find the ten golden rules, best of which is the tenth: "Forget the ten golden rules - discover your very own lomography. Immerse yourself in what's going on. Do it and do what you want. But do it now."

"I take my Lomo whenever I go outside," says one enthusiast who identifies himself as No.223. He regularly posts pictures in Lomographic chatrooms and other websites. "I'm always trying new angles to shoot, because LC-A never gets me bored," says No.223. "Lomography is simply about snapshots," says another enthusiast, Doctor, a webzine photographer and member of online magazine Coldtea. "What makes it



unique is the effect it has, the way the subject in the shot often contrasts with the surroundings. And, technically, it focuses faster than a digital camera." Another Coldtea member Madi offers her opinion: "Lomo just fits me so well, as the colors are bright and it's easy to handle. It relaxes my nerves when I'm shooting, just like the philosophy says."

But since Lomo uses film, isn't it more complicated and costly than digital? "I just regard Lomo as an ordinary fool-proof camera. I'm not that worried about the cost," says Sweetdie, a freelance photographer. "I usually scan the negatives so that it costs less," says Madi. Arty, who founded LOMOChina.com this June with another girl Aling, is not worried about the technical limitations of the art-form. "As it is film, not instant images, when you press the shutter, the image is captured. You cannot turn back and do it again as you can with a digital camera," she says. "I always feel a kind of tension before I see my films developed. It gives me true feelings, whether a pleasant surprise or disappointment, and this is something you don't really get from a digital camera."

Lomography in China

The Lomo craze looks set to grow in China. The first big event here happened from June 28 to July 4, when the Lomography World Congress 2004 was held in Beijing. It's an annual gathering for Lomographers to get together, to shoot, to talk and above all to have fun. Each year, it is held in a different place, and this year, sponsored by BMW X3, around 120 people from all over the world came to Beijing to shoot local scenes with their Lomo cameras, and to taste the local food and culture. This year, Li Zhenhua was formally inaugurated as the first Lomography Ambassador of China. And at 6:30 pm on July 3, the Great Lomo Wall was revealed in Ritan Park, comprised of 70,000



Lomo pictures from 65 countries in a 200-meter long Lomo wall, next to the Altar of the Sun. It was the biggest Lomo Wall since the legendary 1997 exhibit in Madrid.

Also in July, the nationwide Lomography site LOMOChina.com was established by two Beijing girls Arty and Aling, both of whom work for a design company. Arty has long been an ardent fan of photography and has a personal website showing her visual diaries. LOMOChina has already pulled in about 2,500 registered members. They can paste their Lomo pictures and exchange ideas in the forum. Recently, the first LOMOChina members' gathering took place and 50 people attended. In a small bar near The Drum Tower near Houhai, they built their own Lomo Wall and played various games. When asked about the difference between LOMOChina.com and the official sites, Arty pointed out, "I prefer more stuff of our own. I think the official sites are somewhat limited. Their pictures are all of the same style. I think we can put our own culture and attitude in the pictures because Chinese culture is so unique. Lomo is only a tool. We need to add our fresh ideas and deep thoughts through it," Arty told *Beijing Today*. LOMOChina.com also provides a purchasing service offering decent quality cameras.

Lomo, it seems, is an attitude more than a tool. Some say Lomographs are pictures shot with the least possible brains and are for people who don't have an artistic temperament or vision. Arty says, "Though it is hard to decide whether a Lomograph is good or bad, I do believe there are criteria. Apart from the traditional values, Lomographs must embody the photographer's soul and character." Admittedly, the intent of Lomography is to be released from all the burdens of traditional photography, and capture life as it is, as directly as possible.

Photos by Sabu, Arty, Madi and 223



What's New

By Tom Spearman

CD

Supergrass is 10: The Best of, '94-2004



Supergrass surfed to the top as Britpop arose in the '90s but they kept going as the scene faded and other bands fell away. Surviving wasn't bad, but listening to this collection of tracks it's hard to work out why the band haven't enjoyed more success and prominence. It's jammed with fantastic tunes, from the early three-minute blasts of pure pop energy to the slower more thoughtful later stuff. *Mansize Rooster* was their breakthrough song and it's still breathless and brilliant, as is *Alright*, their biggest hit. Some of the fun was lost in their later albums but they've always had a knack for writing terrific tunes. Second album *Richard III* was probably the best and five tracks from it are featured here, but the band have been amazingly consistent, the more recent *Mary and Kiss of Life* showing all the old song-writing verve.

DVD



This So-called Disaster

The film-about-a-film genre has produced numerous fascinating and well-loved movies. Films about the making of a play are somewhat harder to come by, which is one of the things that makes *This So-called Disaster* so interesting. It's a fly-on-the-wall documentary following writer/actor/director Sam Shephard as he directs one of his own plays, *The Late Henry Moss*, in which Sean Penn and Nick Nolte play two estranged brothers brought together by the death of their father. We get to see the process of rehearsals as the director and actors try to bring the characters in the play to life. It's intense stuff, and offers a compelling view of the alchemy required from the director and actors, Shephard describing his own script as no more than a blueprint. There is also a series of interesting and amusing interviews with Shephard, Penn and Nolte, in which they discuss what it was that got them into acting.



The Complete Monty Python's Flying Circus

Still completely different after all these years, every single episode of the legendary British comedy show is now available in a 14-disc box set. John Cleese, Michael Palin, Terry Jones, Graham Chapman and Eric Idle were all set for promising careers after getting into Oxford and Cambridge, the two most prestigious universities in Britain. But then they started Monty Python, possibly the unluckiest idea in comedy history. Sketches involving men striving to become the first to eat an entire Anglican chapel somehow tickled the world's funny bone and the show became a cult sensation. Along with Terry Gilliam's genius for animation, the show boasts fearsome comic creations such as the joke so funny, anyone who heard it would die laughing: "Venn ist das nurnstuck git und slotermeyer? Ya! Begerhund das oder die Flipperwaldt gersput!"

Colorful Classic Revival

By Pan Hao

What would you say if your wife found another woman's shoe and jewelry in your room? Well, you could say "Strangel!" loudly while keeping an innocent face. That is what Emperor Tang Ming Huang (685-762 AD) said to his concubine, Lady Yang (719-756 AD), when he was being questioned about his loyalty. This is not the only thing you can learn from classic Kunqu Opera masterpiece *The Palace of Eternal Youth*, directed by Gu Duhuang, starring Wang Fang (as Lady Yang) and Zhao Wenlin (as Emperor Tang Ming Huang) and performed by Suzhou Kunqu Opera Theatre.

As the first show of the three night series which opened at Poly Theatre last Saturday night, *The Palace Of Eternal Youth* began on a happy note before descending into chaos. The story is familiar to many and is dramatic rather than tragic. The story of Emperor Tang Ming Huang and Lady Yang has been produced in many different forms over the years but has a quality that makes it enduringly popular. It's a dense story, blending love, envy, dreams, and the fate of separation and reunion, and seasoned with a bit of fairytale and historic events.

Lady Yang seems to be the kind of ideal woman that men dream of. She was beautiful and charismatic as well as talented at singing and dancing. But she was also jealous. Wang Fang brought both energy and a timeworn beauty to the part. Singing and dancing on a plate one minute, composing music and confessing her sorrows the next, she would veer from anger to prettier moods in an instant, just like a little girl. Zhao Wenlin sculptured his character, the Emperor Tang Ming Huang, as a man in love as well as an emperor. The costumes were another selling point for the performance. The luxuriant and glamorous robes were exclusively hand-made for the production by Yip Karm Tim.



Photo by Tian Yufeng

Dream of the Temporary Citizen

By Jacqueline Yu

Among the 13-million population of Beijing, around 3 million people hold temporary residence permits, whether migrant workers or middle class professionals. One thing they all have in common is dreams, and these are expressed in *Temporary Living Certificate*, a drama and modern dance performance held at the People's Art Theatre in Wangfujing.

This is the third time the play has been staged in the last twelve months. Hu Lei and Zhang Disha, two dancers from Beijing Modern Dance Company, have taught audiences and critics that a vivid and energetic play doesn't always mean sumptuous stage sets; simple props like an office chair and a bicycle are used to great effect in *Temporary Living Certificate*. And you don't have to have a large group of coordinators working on every part of the process, from script to lighting, choreography and costumes. Zhang and Hu did virtually the whole thing on their own.

But the real power of the production comes from the performers. In a dusty blue light, two figures in padded jackets, maybe migrant workers, slowly and timidly enter the city. They put down a

sponge cushion as a bed and sit shoulder to shoulder on it. Their new life begins. A stream of orange light caresses the couple and in the pure and beautiful piano music of *There Was Snow* from the movie *Horse Whisperer*, they huddle together and start to dream of a better, more prosperous life, using the sponge cushion as a little boat.

Perhaps the best part of the first act was the soliloquy from Hu Lei (the husband) about his plan to buy a car, a recognizable ambition for most Chinese urban people. Hu's deep and clear voice conveyed every word to the audience. Striding back and forth, he looked like any dreamer, saying he would choose a white Audi with leather seats. Suddenly he remembers he has no money, and to get loan from a bank he must be a permanent resident, with a hukou. On the back of the stage, his wife (Zhang), is riding a bicycle, with her back to the audience, resembling the image familiar to everyone who lives in Beijing. The music is a French-sounding melody, warm and romantic. The first act closes with the couple sharing their modest bicycle and riding home in the same blue light.

If the theme of the first act is the romantic aspects of a simple life, the second focuses on what can be lost amidst

prosperity. Waking up, the couple suddenly found notes of money dropping onto them from the sky. Suddenly they are rich. After a short solo by Zhang Disha, depicting her intoxication with the money, Hu, in a totally different new shirt with a blue flower pattern, locked the audience's attention again. This time, he acted as the host of a TV program teaching how to get rich by "sending nice presents" to officials or powerful people. Both Hu and Zhang present a couple named "dizzy with success." They dance hilariously, laugh at another immigrant couple, and decide to put their old possessions – the cotton padded jackets, the sponge cushion and their white bicycle up for auction. The play concludes on a surprising note as their ordinary old possessions are sold for tons of gold!

A blend of dream and satire, *Temporary Living Certificate* may be a story of immigrant workers on the surface, but it is also the story of ordinary hopes and ambitions and the things people lose and gain along the way.

Temporary Living Certificate will be performed in mini theatre till December 26, every night at 7:30 pm with admission at 80 yuan and 40 yuan for student.



Photo by Tian Yufeng

A Suffocating Drama

By Zhou Ying

Before entering the theater to see horror drama *Suffocation*, some among the audience were sceptical about whether a stage play could possibly create the same atmosphere of terror as a movie. But the play's debut last Saturday, in The North Theater in Dongcheng district, did a pretty good job of scaring its viewers.

The plot may sound familiar. An annual intelligence test on the radio attracts the interest of the public owing to the huge cash prize for the winner. Six university students decide to enter, believing that by pooling their expertise they're bound to win. Everything goes well and they pass the first five steps, but then the boy studying religion fails to answer the last question, and they miss the opportunity to win the bonus. Later that night, the boy dies, and his sister, the psychology student, goes crazy. It appears as though the boy has committed suicide because of shame

and guilt, but his lover, the art student, believes he was killed by one of the six.

A year later, the remaining four students gather again to try their luck at the game a second time. Surprise, surprise, the same process of events happens again. Two more friends die after one has given the wrong answer and the two left alive begin to suspect each other.

The director creates a suffocating world by showing us a crazy intrigue, suspicious human nature, and the stench of greed. Wearing white masks, black gowns, a pair of mysterious gloves, and with props like a dagger, the stage setting became all the more intense and scary, particularly when some of the victims were chased among the audience seats. Some people even had to leave early. Attend if you dare.

When: December 12-28, 2004; January 6-16, 2005 **Where:** North Theater, Bei Bingmasi Hutong, 67 Jiadaokou Nandajie, Dongcheng **Admission:** 40-180 yuan



Photo by Wang Xiaoxi

Zhang Yi, a consultant from the human resources department of ExxonMobil China Investment Co. chatted on www.edu.sina.com with students interested in working at the oil and petrochemical company on November 18.

ExxonMobil currently has 1,200 employees in the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong.

The company's annual recruiting season runs from October to December, Zhang said, adding plans this year called for recruiting 11 professionals to work in its branches in Shanghai, Guangzhou and HK. These available positions include chemical sales assistants, customer service managers, finance and accounting officers and fuel marketing sales trainees. Details are available at www.54club.com.

Recruitment and positions:

Q: What business fields does your company cover in China? Is there any research-oriented work? Would it be possible for me, a Chinese student in Europe, to apply to ExxonMobil in Europe and then work in China?

Zhang: Our main business areas in China are lubricants and chemical products. For research work, the core of ExxonMobil's business, we have not yet set up any centers in China.

Students in Europe can definitely try to find work here. There are two ways. First, you can join a branch of ExxonMobil in Europe and then express your willingness to work in China. Usually, there are opportunities for employees to shift between different places or departments every year.

Second, we have an international recruitment website especially targeted at overseas students who want work back in their home country. You can apply to the positions online and our recruiters will contact you.

Q: I have sent my resume to your company, but have not received any response. Could you introduce your recruitment procedures?

Zhang: We will start interviews in the middle of December and send job offers before Spring Festival.

Generally speaking, we collect all the resumes received, select the top ones and send notices for interviews before the deadline. Normally, we conduct two rounds of interviews, in which business directors and HR managers will meet with candidates.

Q: I am studying for a master's in chemistry and want to know the



A team from ExxonMobil took part in the 17th China International Plastic and Rubber Expo in Beijing on December 4. ExxonMobil is accelerating its development in the China market and promoting many products, from chemicals to kitchen clears, outside its traditional fields of oil exploration and technology.

Photo by Photocom

Sina.com, one of China's three portal websites, is conducting a series of interviews with human resources supervisors from leading multinational and domestic companies to assess differences in corporate cultures and uncover interesting job vacancies.

Beijing Today, with Sina.com's agreement, will select and publish excerpts from these interviews starting this week.

Talking Jobs and Corporate Culture:

ExxonMobil After New Blood

work content of the chemical sales assistant position.

Zhang: We will hire two assistants in Shanghai. One will be in charge of polymer sales and the other for intermediates products. Both will be expected to provide support for sales people, communicate with end customers, understand our whole sales process and offer solutions to sales problems.

Selection standards:

Q: How do you select proper candidates?

Zhang: We look for people with strong analytical skills and perseverant, honest characters.

As an energy and petrochemical company, we have to be very prudent, for our projects can take billions of dollars to run. Every step and decision must go through careful consideration, so we hope to hire logical, clear-thinking people who can contribute to that process.

Q: What are your requirements for language abilities? How often is English used at the workplace?

Zhang: In ExxonMobil, English is a must. For example, I had a teleconference with managers from Ma-

laysia, Japan, Hong Kong and the US this morning. We talked about how to improve our professional interviewing skills. There would be no way to join in such a meeting and express one's ideas without speaking English.

Q: You have said that you focus on candidates' competence. Does that mean you put less emphasis on university degrees and majors?

Zhang: Degrees and majors are certainly important in the selection process. If candidates don't have solid knowledge and strong learning ability, they will not be able to make it in our company.

On the other hand, we not only consider scores, but also activities. For instance, we often evaluate candidates' team spirit through their participation in school activities or volunteering.

Internships and training:

Q: Do you have any internship programs for students still on campus?

Zhang: We warmly welcome students to work with us, but because our industry mostly deals with extended projects that require hard work from all involved, we offer few internship pro-



Zhang Yi, a consultant from the human resources department of ExxonMobil China

Courtesy of Sina.com

grams in China. We do have such programs in the US and UK.

Q: What kind of training does ExxonMobil provide to the newcomers? How can they best adapt to the new working environment as quickly as possible?

Zhang: We assign newcomers to experienced partners who introduce them to everything in the office or worksite. Six months later, we give them practical knowledge about the industry.

Staff training is divided into three types: training for improving work efficiency, technical and professional training and leadership training.

Usually, before new employees choose training programs, they talk it out with their bosses or managers to help identify their weak spots and where training could best help them improve.

(Edited by Xie Lixue)

More Graduates Set to Flood Market

By Zhao Hongyi

More than 3.38 million university graduates are expected to enter the labor market in 2005, according to the latest figures from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security.

That would mean an increase of 20.71 percent, or 580,000 students, from this year and pose a potentially serious challenge to the market and social stability, the ministry warned at an internal meeting held earlier this month in Beijing.

Of the 2.8 million young people who graduated this year, 73 percent, or 2.04 million, had found jobs by the end of September, 560,000 more than in the same period of 2003.

Though many graduates hoped or expected to enter foreign-invested companies to start their careers, only 10 percent would get the chance, while 14 percent were expected to enter state-owned enterprises, the ministry said. The remaining 70-plus percent would find jobs in the private sector, including starting their own businesses.

Manufacturing, enterprise management and marketing are the three major sectors absorbing 70 percent of graduates, according to the ministry. Graduates of electric and electronics, construction and design, computer, marketing, law, business management and finance are the most welcomed in the labor market.

The importance of foreign language ability, particularly in English, is increasing and many enterprises are willing to pay more to get recruits with strong language proficiency.

Chinese Minister of Education Zhou Ji announced last Friday that the government would shift some money from national scholarship funds to reward graduates willing to take positions in the country's relatively undeveloped western regions.

Campus Recruitment Tour:

DaimlerChrysler Offering Careers for College Stars



Photo by Imaginechina

By Xie Lixue

Students of Beijing Institute of Technology, Beijing University, Tsinghua University and University of Science and Technology Beijing recently crowded seminar rooms and auditoriums to learn about job opportunities at DaimlerChrysler (China) Ltd. when the carmaker held the local leg of its November 8-December 26 national tour.

DaimlerChrysler has 362,000 employees working in 37 countries for 14 brands of vehicles worldwide. The company recruited 1,400 new university graduates to its global ranks in 2004.

Chinese students set to graduate next year can apply to positions related to finance, IT, sales and marketing, technical translators, sales and after-sales services and advertising.

In addition, coveted intern positions relating to sales and product assistance, after-sales coordination and cooperation planning are opening to applications from college students from now until May next year.

"The five key characteristics we are

looking for in new employees are business discipline, entrepreneurial competence, social skills and teamwork, ability to learn and grow and strong communication skills," Chen Guanghui, manager of DaimlerChrysler (China)'s human resources department told *Beijing Today*.

Chen Quan, human resources manager of Beijing Benz DaimlerChrysler Corp., said the company, formerly known as Beijing Jeep Corp., would hire about 100 graduates and professionals in the new year.

Online applications will be accepted at www.zhaopin.com through the end of December and the selection and interviewing process will begin in January. Further details can be found at the Web sites www.career.daimlerchrysler.com, www.mercedes-benz.com.cn, and www.beijing-jeep.com

Q: I am a university senior and will be awarded double bachelor degrees in materials and international trade when I graduate. Do I have any advantages in applying and which degree will likely

be more useful for me during recruitment?

Chen Guanghui: First, I think you have some advantages because knowledge of both technology and the market can help a company generate profits.

Second, as for which one will be more useful, I think it depends on your interests. If you like being involved in research and development using your know-how of materials, you can choose technical departments. Otherwise, departments related to business and management would be suitable for you.

Q: I took the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) and Graduate Record Examination (GRE) exams this year. Do you use these exams in assessing English ability?

Chen Guanghui: Yes. English and German are the working languages at DaimlerChrysler China. We will take your scores into consideration, but we have our own English test for applicants.

Q: I graduated with a bachelor's degree related to automobiles, worked one year at a train manufacturer, and now I am studying for a master's in mechanics. Can I apply for the posts at Beijing Jeep, and if I am hired, will I still need to work in the jeep factory for half a year?

Chen Quan: First I think your work experience at the train manufacturer is helpful for applying in our company, because some theories are applicable across mechanical fields.

Second, I hope everyone will look at our half-year internships as chances to learn, instead of considering them as work.

Situations Vacant

Jinzhou Yinbo Foreign Languages & Computer School is looking for teachers of foreign languages and computers. Please send resumes and photos to:

Yinbo Foreign Languages & Computer School, Ziyuan Hotel, Jinzhou, Hebei Province 052260

Tel: 0311-316000

Website: www.inhb.com

Vacant positions for English teachers and editors. If you come from the US, Canada, the UK or Australia, and you will stay in China for more than half a year, please contact us. You can do it part-time and you can do your editorial job at home.

Tel: 62552834,

13381392538

E-mail: caoyanqin008@sohu.com

The automobile air conditioner factory of Morning Sun (Guangdong) Ltd. in Zhengcheng city is seeking office secretaries, translators, sales managers, marketing managers, accountants, accounting managers, recruiting managers, purchasing managers, quality inspectors, technicians and engineers. For more details or to submit resumes, please visit: www.dyy99.com

Beijing Fei Wanda is looking for three print designers, two commercial advertising collectors and two secretaries. Contact: 8737 8652 ext. 82/83 E-mail: kf@fwd863.com

Looking for two engineers in wastewater disposal and treatment. English and AutoCAD are musts. We'll provide training opportunities once recruited in China and abroad.

E-mail: hr@ouyawater.com

Website: www.ouyawater.com

A cultural media company wants to hire a foreigner for international business.

Requirements: male, British, long time in Beijing, love Chinese culture, stable, honest. Legal experience an advantage.

Contact:

sun198052@yahoo.com.cn

Webmasters wanted. Familiarity with the Internet, web page design and music composition software essential. Love of music useful.

Contact Mr. Hu at: 6333 1671 ext. 8006.

Job Services

Immigrating to Canada? Study, business visit, corporate registration, patent and trademark registration or legal litigation in Canada? Document translation in English? Please contact:

Add: 7100 Woodbine Ave. Suite 110, Markham, ON. L3R 5J2 Canada

Tel: 001-905-415-1728, or 1792

Fax: 001-905-415-1750

Email: canadaimmcr@yahoo.ca

Website: www.mkgi.com

Help you to change your visa (f, x, z, j) and apply for a green card.

Tel: 8659 2919

E-mail: alen678@163.com

(You are welcome to send positions offered and wanted info to: ayi@ynet.com. Beijing Today does not take any responsibility for the accuracy and authenticity of the information published in this column.)

A Beijing-based English newspaper is looking for reporters, freelancers and editors.

Chinese applicants should have university degrees in English or related majors and media experience.

Foreigners from the UK and US with relevant media experience preferred.

Please send your resumes and writing samples to: hr@ynet.com

By Zhang Nan

Chinese students are heading abroad to study in unprecedented numbers, creating great opportunities for businesses that offer related services, from assisting with applications to schools and arranging visas to purchasing tickets, handling accommodation and providing career guidance.

But with high profits drawing more business into the field, doubts have starting rising about the quality, reliability and costs of such services. Starting this week, Beijing Today will take regular, in-depth looks at these issues by talking directly to the heads of study abroad agencies to give a clear picture of this sector.

Have you ever thought about handling everything involved in studying abroad by yourself?

It is feasible, and potentially very constructive, but not an easy thing to do.

"It can help students know about society and strengthen their abilities to act independently to go through all the related procedures before going abroad to study," He Ke, a vice manager at an overseas education service center belonging to China Star Corp. said in an interview with *Beijing Today* on Monday.

China Star, which started business in 1986, is among the top domestic study abroad agencies authorized by the Ministry of Education in 2000.

It is a comprehensive company that provides human resource services to foreign companies, international labor cooperation services, human resource exchange and economic technology cooperation services and overseas education services.

BT: How does your company, one of the agencies recognized by the Ministry of Education, strive to find a foothold in the fiercely competitive agency market and establish a solid reputation?

He Ke: We always endeavor to give our customers the best services. We believe that strength and knowledge are the most important qualities in this business. Consultants in our company must have experience studying or living abroad. We have also employed former visa officers from different countries' embassies to give clients professional, reliable advice and help.

BT: What are your key points for serving students?

He: The first thing is honesty, second is service.

BT: In your opinion, what should agencies do to provide students concrete and believable information?

He: The first thing is to establish relationships with foreign universities in order to get first-hand information. China Star always works with national universities, and when we work with private universities, we try to establish relationships with those with long histories and good reputations. We also send our staff abroad to see the universities themselves.

Second, agencies should have good relationships with foreign embassies in Beijing so they can get timely access to new visa policies and information. Embassies can also provide other useful resources and news regarding studying abroad.

BT: Some students have complained that agencies' charges are very high. What is your company's standard for setting charges?

He: Actually, we define our charges according to our costs, or overhead. We have to rent office space, advertise and recruit and hire staff. Around 80 percent of the charges we present students go to cover our daily



Photo by Imaginechina

Growing Pains of Agency Market



He Ke, vice manager at China Star Corporation, one of Beijing's leading overseas education service centers. Photo by Zhang Nan

operation expenses.

BT: What do you think of the current development of the agency market in China?

He: In my opinion, the current condition of the agency market in China is good and normal.

It has been four years since the domestic government began to normalize the agency market.

In Hong Kong and Taiwan, it took 10 years for the agency market to generally complete its development.

Although we have met some troubles, such as the appearance of unqualified agencies, I still think the market is developing smoothly.

A good argument is that the Ministry of Education authorized another 60 agencies in China, including 19 in Beijing earlier this month.

Competition is sure to further intensify in the future. But people will have a better knowledge of this market and have more choices.

They should choose the qualified agencies for services.

BT: In recent years, the number of unqualified agencies has grown and their problems and faults, like giving false information and making unclear charges, have become more obvious.

In your opinion, how and why do these unqualified agencies survive in the market? Do they have negative impact on the business of qualified agencies?

He: Unqualified agencies indeed influence us a lot.

One of the reasons is that they have lower charges than qualified agencies, often because these agencies do not need to rent much office space – they can conduct business from small spaces with limited staff. That means their costs are lower and they earn more profits from students' fee payments.

It is easy for those unqualified agencies to survive in the market.

Generally speaking, the people who run unqualified agencies fall into three categories: people who have studied or lived abroad and come back to China; so-called representative offices of foreign universities; and foreign companies.

Unqualified agencies only focus on earning money.

BT: Do you think it is possible that foreign capital will enter the agency market in China in the future?

He: Yes, I think so.

However, I don't think that domestic agencies will compete with foreign companies. It is more likely that domestic agencies will cooperate with foreign companies, such as by founding joint ventures in which the foreign side provides the capital and the domestic side provides the services and staff.

BT: Do you think students can go through the procedures of going abroad independently without agencies' help?

He: Of course. It can help students to know about society and to strengthen their abilities to act independently to go through all the related procedures before going abroad to study.

However, not all students are suited for the do-it-yourself method.

University graduates, because they are older and more mature, are likely to understand themselves and know what they want to be or do in the future, giving them direction for choosing appropriate universities or fields of study. But younger students, like high school graduates, are better off choosing to get help from an agency. The agency's experienced consultants can help them plan their future studies and select a major that fits.

BT: What suggestions do you have for students hoping to study abroad?

He: I would like to remind students who want to go abroad and their parents that a mature mentality is the most important thing for starting a new life in a strange country. Parents should communicate with their children to know what they want and what they are thinking. Also, students should have basic language knowledge. Next, students should have a clear understanding of their families' situations, including their financial conditions. I'd also stress that students' abilities to live independently and communicate with strangers are rather important factors. If you are very uncomfortable making new friends in a new and strange environment, you will have a hard time studying abroad.

Ask Ayi:

Q: I read an article about the University of Calgary in *Beijing Today*, and am interested about student life on campus. Can you tell me something about student activities at the U of C?

— mengbi

A: The University of Calgary offers a variety of clubs, recreation activities, volunteer experiences and special events for students to choose from.

There are 145 clubs and organizations on campus.

Becoming involved in the U of C community offers the chance to meet new people, gain valuable life experiences, open doors to exciting career opportunities and make the most of students' undergraduate experiences.

Volunteer opportunities exist all over campus in many student services offices.

Students can get involved in special events like the campus fair, conduct campus tours, or volunteer for one of the programs offered through student union volunteer services.

Q: Can people studying in Austria apply for scholarships?

— POP

A: There are a number of scholarship programs in Austria that are open to applications from foreign students, graduates or professors.

The most important of those scholarships are:

Osterreich-Stipendium (for graduates);

Ernst Mach-Stipendium (for graduates from all fields of study excluding the arts);

Bertha von Suttner-Stipendium (for graduates interested in pursuing a complete doctoral program excluding the arts);

Franz Werfel-Stipendium (for university lecturers interested in specialized studies of Austrian literature at libraries, archives or research institutions); and,

North-South-Dialogue Scholarship (for post-graduates in the fields of natural science, engineering, social sciences and economics or doctoral studies).

Q: Are the diplomas used in China the same as those granted in France?

— cau-th

A: There is no official standard to judge whether diplomas in France are equal to diplomas in China. The education ministries of China and France have signed an agreement about recognition of higher education diplomas which states it is up to each institution of higher education in each country to decide the equivalence of diplomas from schools from the other country.

(Edited By Zhang Nan)



Students from different countries gave performances at the Second International Night of Beijing University last Friday. Photo by Zhang Nan

Foreign Students Get Festive at Beijing University Mixer

To help new foreign students meet friends and get familiar with campus, Beijing University held its second annual International Night party at its Zhengda International Center last Friday.

The fun event drew a large crowd of foreign and Chinese students, some of whom gave performances, such as singing, dancing, playing guitar and performing martial arts.

The party was organized and held by the Students' International Communication Association as part of the university's tutor program for international students. The association has arranged for 67 Chinese students to act as tutors to help international students, and more than 140 people from 19 countries have taken part in the program to date.

(By Zhang Nan)

Where the Geeks Are 2

The latest issue of Princeton Review published a list of the 10 hardest colleges in the US where students never stop studying assembled from lists made online by the "geeks" themselves.

Last week, *Beijing Today* reprinted the first half of the list – below, we present the final five temples of American geekdom.

6. Worcester Polytechnic Institute

The workload is tough at this science, engineering and computer science heavyweight, made even tougher by a quarterly academic calendar. The WPI undergraduate experience centers around the "WPI Plan," a series of required independent projects designed to build research ability and teamwork skills. Students approve of WPI's unique approach. One shares a common sen-

timent among students, writing, "The WPI plan forces real-world experience on college students." But a heavy workload and a lopsided male-female ratio leave little time or opportunity for a social life.

7. Wellesley College

This all-women's undergraduate institution near Boston is not just a college; it is also, according to one typical enthusiast, "a community dedicated to developing women of superior intellect, life skills, and savvy. It's simply the best." Students probably are less enthusiastic about the brutal workload the school demands, although most accept it as an essential part of the Wellesley experience. "It'll be the hardest four years of your life, but also the most rewarding," sums up one student.

8. Wabash College

Students at all-male Wabash must complete a required core of liberal arts courses, fulfill a major concentration, and pass comprehensive written and oral examinations in order to graduate. The workload is very demanding, according to students. But, as one student testifies, their efforts are abetted by professors who "push us to the furthest extent possible so that we can do the most with our given ability. I've never worked so hard in my life, and I've never gotten so much out of anything, academically, socially, and personally, as I have from Wabash."

9. Smith College

Academics at this all-female college can be extremely demanding, according to students. Many students write that

the support network provided by professors and other students are crucial aids as they dive headlong into the hard work found in almost every class. "Smithies," as Smith students refer to themselves, boast that they're the kind of students who "study for fun."

10. Cornell University:

Ivy League member Cornell boasts a catalog of over 4,000 undergraduate courses, and a top notch faculty to boot. Students seem universally appreciative of the help they get from their professors in negotiating the rigorous academic program. One student speaks for many, by boasting that, "Profs are friendly and approachable." And while Cornell students say that they work hard all week, they also claim that they "party hard on the weekends."

A Foodie's Wish List

By Joel Kirkhart

Across cultures and holidays, winter 'tis the season of giving, and food-related gifts, be they chocolate, nuts, booze or fruit, are always popular choices. Yet the pleasures of such presents are fleeting, offering foodie friends and family members instant, but teasingly limited, gratification. For gifts that keep on giving, try presents of quality cookware – devices as beautiful as they are functional that are sure to satisfy the gear nerd lurking in everyone. Top-of-the-line items don't come cheap, but they should be looked at as investments your favorite chefs will treasure their whole lives. Here are 12 suggestions for great cooking gifts, available at the Lufthansa Yansha Shopping Center in Chaoyang District:

Kindest cuts: Chinese tradition holds knives should not be given as presents, as they symbolize a wish to sever a relationship, but who could be offended by tools of this quality from Germany's Zwilling JA Henckel? The "Cologne" series set on the left, made by a domestic joint venture, offers serious cut for the money with top tempered stainless steel and comfort grips for the relatively low price of 245 yuan.

The mack: For a more lavish gift, try the imported Zwilling chef's knife at right that boasts cold-tempered steel for a nearly permanent razor sharp edge, perfect balance, an ergonomic handle and the pride of knowing you own a blade that costs 788 yuan.

Close shave: Ever want to emulate Paulie from *Goodfellas* and slice garlic so thin that it "liquefied in the pan with just a little oil"? The fine folks at WMF have made following his system ridiculously easy by creating this elegant garlic slicer, whose adjustable, stable blade can pare off even slivers of any desired thickness. (230 yuan)

One divine hammer: Tenderize anything with this pounding mallet from German brand WMF. It may look like a stainless-steel sledge, but it actual has a very usable, mild heft as well as carefully shaped surfaces to maximize tenderization and minimize effort. Perfect for bashing chicken breasts and pork culets into tender submission and keeping "assistant chefs" in line. (790 yuan)

Tools of the trade: Considering 5 yuan wood and plastic devices can do just as good a job, this 1,318-yuan set of four cooking utensils from Germany's Fissler is all about extravagance. What that kind of cash buys is a set of serious cooking bling-bling comprised of a peeler, spatula, ladle and slotted pasta scoop, all in gleaming, immaculate stainless steel.

Peppy and perky: Pots from Italy's Bielelli are the Ferrari of coffee makers, and this espresso pot is one high-performance machine indeed. The perkolater atop its stylish red head allows home barristas to judge the readiness of their brew by color and the stainless steel body spreads the warmth while holding up to even the highest heat. (580 yuan)

Prime stock: This saucepot from Zwilling JA Henckel is no regular vessel. Made of high-quality stainless steel, it is tough, elegant and distributes heat evenly to ensure consistent browning and no burning. The plastic toggles on top protect hands and provide a handy place to stash a stirring utensil while cooking. (448 yuan)

Slice and dice: Zwilling's rolling herb cutter looks like a piece of art and makes quick, easy work of flat leaves and other things challenging to chop while eliminating worries of lopping off fingertips. Simply roll it back and forth over a pile of cilantro or parsley or even larger stuff and the sharp blades produce fine, even pieces in seconds. (199 yuan)

Flash in the pan: You'll be afraid to cook on the buffed, beautiful mirror-like surface of this Fissler frying pan, but rest assured it can do the business without getting messed. The secret to its efficient, non-stick cooking is its high-quality stainless steel surface and all the little dimples, which let meat or fish brown nicely in just a bit of oil. Plastic fish not included. (1,480 yuan)

Matter of taste: This set from Pedrini puts all the basic spices cooks need – from salt and black pepper to curry powder and cayenne – at handy, spinning, stylish disposal. Sure, a similar spice collection could be put together for a fraction of the set's 540 yuan cost, but this one sure looks nifty.

Pull out the stops: Why risk a fine vintage wine, or even a bottle of cheap plonk, to a low-quality corkscrew that could mangle the cork? This fine tool from Pedrini offers clean lines, a no-slip grip, easy action and peace of mind that corks will live to plug another day for 297 yuan.

Top popper: The reigning champion of the corkscrew world is the patented Screwpull. It may look like an instrument of dental torture, but this lever-action device actually applies gentle pressure to safely lift and protect any cork with almost no effort and is sure to impress even the most jaded of wine lovers. So is its price – a whopping 3,600 yuan.

Photos by Joel Kirkhart

Dining Out for Christmas

By James Liu

Christmas Eve Celebration at Presidential Plaza



The Presidential Plaza Beijing's party, with the musical *Snow Wolf Lake* as its theme, will feature a sumptuous international seafood buffet complemented by free flow of wine, beer and soft drinks, a dancing show and fabulous prizes. **Cost:** 988, 1,188, 1,288 yuan net per adult, 666 yuan net per child **Tel:** 5858 5588 ext. 8340

Joyful Celebrations at Shangri-La Hotel



The essence of Christmas – joy, harmony and celebration – takes over the Shangri-La with festive buffets and a al carte feasts at Cafe Cha, Shang Palace and Nishimura. Christmas Eve buffets at Cafe Cha (5:30-7:45 pm, 998 yuan per person) and Shang Palace (788 yuan per person). Feast again at Cafe Cha on Christmas Day (398 yuan per person for brunch buffet, 488 yuan for dinner).

Holiday Gala Dinner at Renaissance

Come to the Sunflower Ballroom and celebrate Christmas in style with the ultimate



Christmas party at the Renaissance Hotel. Extravagant buffets, unlimited selection of local wines and beer, various entertainment and exciting lucky draw prizes await you! 1,388 yuan net per adult (includes a glass of champagne and free flow local beer, wine and soft drinks) 528 yuan net per child. **When:** Christmas Eve, 6:30-10:30 pm

Noel Extravaganza at Hyatt



Treat yourself to two days of fun, festive feasting at the Hyatt's restaurants on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. On December 24, check out delectable Chinese spreads at Noble Court and Made in China, or try more traditional holiday fare at Da Giorgio, Grand Cafe and our top party in the Grand Ballroom (888 yuan-1,688 yuan a person). The next day, wake up late and indulge in a Christmas lunch buffet, featuring Santa himself and Western and Asian fare, for 268 yuan per head. **Tel:** 8518 1234 ext. 6362

Christmas in Peace

Watch a fabulous fashion show, enjoy a sumptuous buffet and non-stop flow of drinks and get a chance to win a round trip ticket to Paris including accommodation! 688 yuan net per person, children under 10 years old 50 percent off. **Where:** Peace Hall, Novotel Peace Beijing **When:** December 24 **Tel:** 6512 8833

Creamy Christmas Goodness



By Sarah Bai

Classic Christmas drinks are rich, warming and headily alcoholic to fend off the winter chills and come filled with the flavors of spices associated with the holidays, like nutmeg, cinnamon and cloves. Mulled cider, a brew of fresh apple cider normally with some oranges and spices, is a classic, but the king of the holiday tippie is rich, creamy eggnog.

Where the name comes from appears to be a mystery. Some say "nog" is a slang term for a rum-based drink, others say it was a British term for strong ale. Yet another version holds that "nog" is a derivative of the word "noggin", which meant a small, wood mug in which some drinks were served.

What is clearer is this combination of eggs, sugar, cream and booze links to a long-standing European tradition of milk-and-alcohol drinks that goes back as far as the Renaissance. Eggnog is an English creation that became enormously popular, especially among the wealthy (meaning those with the cash to buy milk!), and closely associated with Christmas. The British passed their fondness for nog to the Americans, who customized the beverage by spiking it not with brandy, as British tradition called for, but with native spirits like bourbon and rum.

Recipe: Basic eggnog

This is just about the easiest way to make a single serving of eggnog.

Ingredients:

2 to 3 ounces brandy or light rum
1 whole egg
1 tbsp superfine sugar
1 cup milk
1/2 cup crushed ice
Nutmeg

Combine all the ingredients except the nutmeg in a cocktail shaker and shake vigorously. Strain into a tall glass. Grate a little nutmeg on top and serve.

Recipe: Classic eggnog

This thick, soothing drink is just the thing for fending off winter's chill and ringing in a rosy holiday. The recipe is similar to that written by America's first president, George Washington, for his favorite Christmas beverage.

Ingredients:

12 egg whites
12 egg yolks
1 1/2 cups sugar
3/4 cup bourbon or rye whiskey
12 egg whites
3/4 cup brandy
1/2 cup rum
1-2 cups heavy cream, lightly whipped
Ground nutmeg for garnish

Beat egg whites until stiff, gradually adding in 3/4 cup sugar. Set aside. Beat the egg yolks until thick and pale, add the other 3/4 cup sugar and stir in bourbon. Blend well.

Fold egg white mixture into yolk mixture and add brandy and rum. Beat mixture well. To serve, fold lightly whipped heavy cream into eggnog (or add cream unwhipped for a thinner mixture). Sprinkle top with nutmeg.

Personal Classifieds

Accommodation

Brand new luxury 3-bedroom apartment in class community for rent, \$2,120 per month. The apartment is located in Wangjing, 9 kilometers to German International School. Fees paid by tenant: Cable TV, water, gas, electricity, ADSL Internet, phone. Available from January 2005, family/long-term lease/non smoker preferred. No agents. Contact: 13801133854, email: janeing@sohu.com

Two-bedroom apartment with one living room located near Guomao for lease. Well furnished and equipped, 3,500 yuan per month. Contact: 13911015175

Language Exchange

Fred wants to improve his English, both oral and written. Now he is working in a newspaper. Contact: jhm816@sina.com; 63076490

Betty, a 22-year-old English major, just graduated, is now working as a translator. She is looking for an English native speaker as a friend. Contact: zhangqin_0308@163.com, MSN: qianshangzi@hotmail.com

Professional Help

Guo Yueqing, with two years experience in foreign enterprises, wants to find a part-time job in an administrative position, such as secretary, administration assistant or receptionist. Contact: 13522968707

Personal

An unmarried man wants to find "Miss Right": well educated, pretty, age 27-32 preferred. The man: 1.79 meters tall, well educated, living in Fangzhuang. Contact: m_y_zok@yahoo.com.cn; 13522129917

Movies



Kung Fu Hustle (Gong Fu)

Directed by Stephen Chow, starring Stephen Chow, Yuen Wah and Bruce Leung. Set in Canton in the 1940s, the story revolves around a hapless wannabe gangster who aspires to become a member of the notorious "Axe Gang." Other characters include an obnoxious landlady and her apparently frail husband who exhibits extraordinary powers in defending their turf.

Where: UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Shuangyushu Kexueyuan, Haidian **When:** opens December 23 **Tel:** 6261 2851

The Taming of the Shrew

Directed by Franco Zeffirelli, starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard. Set in Padua, Italy in the late 1500s, this film adaptation of Shakespeare's play concerns the shy Bianca and the mean-spirited Caterina, the two daughters of a rich merchant. Though Bianca is being courted by a number of young men, the father announces that she may not marry until Caterina is wed. But none of the men in town is willing to marry Caterina, so Bianca remains alone.

Where: Italian Embassy, 2 Dong'erjie, Sanlitun **When:** December 23, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2187



Howling Wolf

Veteran Hong Kong pop singer Jacky Cheung directs and stars in his own musical, *Snow Wolf Lake*. This play tells the tragic story of lovers from different social backgrounds who become mired in the scandals and jealousies of friends and strangers. Cheung debuted the musical seven years ago, and mainland artists have been brought in for this latest Mandarin version.

Where: Capital Gymnasium, 5 Baishiqiao, Xizhimenwai, Haidian **When:** December 24 - January 1, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-2,280 yuan **Tel:** 6554 6666

Performances

Broadway in Beijing: Chicago

The Tony-award winning revival of *Chicago*, a 1975 Broadway musical classic by John Kander, Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse, takes the local stage. In this musical comedy about sex, cynicism and "show biz" set in 1929 Chicago, an era of crooked officials and tabloid scandals soaked in bathtub gin, a former would-be chorus girl turned accused murderess schemes to parlay her sudden notoriety into vaudeville celebrity. Popular numbers include *All That Jazz*, *Razzle Dazzle*, *My Own Best Friend* and *Mr. Cellophane*. Starring the multi-talented Wayne Brady.

Where: Great Hall of the People **When:** December 24-26, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-2,380 yuan **Tel:** 6417 7845



Ballet: Carmen

The Alberta Ballet Troupe of Canada will stage a four-act ballet version of *Carmen*, one of the world's favorite operas.

Where: Tianqiao Theatre, 30 Beiwailu, Xuanwu **When:** December 23-25, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-680 yuan **Tel:** 8315 6170

Ballet: Raise the Red Lantern (Dahong Denglong Gaogaogua)

Performed by the China Central Ballet Troupe, *Raise the Red Lantern* promises an unforgettable experience for lovers of ballet and traditional Chinese culture.

Where: Poly Theatre, 14 Dongzhimennan Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** December 24-25, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 380-1,000 yuan **Tel:** 6500 1188 ext. 5216

Music

Baby Vox

The hot Korean female group Baby Vox comes to the capital. The story of the Voxes began in 1997 when the name Baby Vox was given to a five member female group and they released their debut album.

Where: National Olympics Center, 1 Anli Lu, Chaoyang **When:** Saturday, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-1,380 yuan **Tel:** 6417 7845

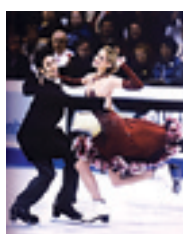


Sports

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final

This winter, figure skating lovers get a real treat - the world-class skating of the Cup of China 2004 ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating and Grand Prix of Figure Skating Finals. The ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating is one of the most important global matches of the International Skating Union and sure to draw top skaters.

Where: Capital Gymnasium, 5 Baishiqiao Lu, Xizhimenwai, Haidian **When:** Friday through Sunday, 6:30 pm **Admission:** 50-300 yuan **Tel:** 6835 4055



Exhibitions



Light of Tradition

This comprehensive art exhibition reviews the past year at Creation Gallery, highlighting the works of eight young and middle-aged Chinese artists recognized for their potential and influence in China's art circles.

Where: Creation Gallery, north end of Ritan Donglu, Chaoyang **When:** through January 9, daily 10 am - 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8561 7570



Xiao Fangkai's Oil Paintings

Created as independent parts of a series, Xiao Fangkai's works express Taoist ideas in an energetic way. They are just like the artist's small studio in the Song Zhuang County - quiet, lively and inspiring.

Where: New Millennium Gallery, Diyang Building, 2 Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang **When:** Saturday to December 30, daily 9 am - 6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8453 6193



Black and White State of Mind

A showcase for over 50 works by Tianjin-based painter Li Anqi, whose partiality for black and white gives his art a rare serenity.

Where: East Gallery, Deshengmen Watchtower, Xicheng **When:** through January 8, Tuesday to Sunday, 9 am - 5:30 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8201 4962



Christmas Carols

A concert called "Joy to the World - Christmas in Beijing" will be staged to celebrate the upcoming holiday. Audience members can enjoy many popular Christmas songs like *Joy to the World* and *Silent Night*. The concert features Chinese baritone Wu Chunkan, soprano Zhou Lingzhen and pianist Chen Yixin.

Where: Red House Entertainment Hall, inside China Pingju Opera House, Xiluoyuan, Fengtai **When:** Saturday, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-280 yuan **Tel:** 8728 0877



Christmas at Yugong Yishan

The Ting crowd comes to Yugong Yishan for Christmas beats under the tree! DJs Usami, Dio, DSK and Partrick Yu.

Where: Yugong Yishan Bar, 1 Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang **When:** December 24, 9 pm **Admission:** 80 **Tel:** 6415 0687

British Christmas

Bar Blu does its best to take you to the UK for Christmas, with a reproduction English bar featuring snacks, crackers, drinks and plenty of party games.

Where: Bar Blu, 4/F Tongli Studios, Sanlitun Beilu, Chaoyang **When:** December 24, 8 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6416 7567

Peace Night

For Christmas Eve, New Get Lucky makes the switch from live music venue to club with underground hip-hop played by the O-Zone crew: DJ Shougo, DJ Takeshi, DJ Larry and DJ Wardy (third place in this year's China DMC competition). Beer and cocktails 10 yuan.

Where: New Get Lucky Bar, in Dongfang Qicai Dashijie, near Nurenjie, Chaoyang **When:** December 24, 10:30 pm **Admission:** 20 yuan **Tel:** 8448 3335

Destination Celebration

For Christmas Eve, Destination will host a very merry night with DJ Spyglass and men in tight Santa outfits. You know you're hardcore when you spend Christmas at Destination.

Where: 7 Gongti Xilu, Chaoyang **When:** December 24, 9 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6551 5138

Blue Christmas Concert of Classic, Romantic Light Music



Yang Chunlin, conductor of the China Song and Dance Ensemble and director of the China Light Music Ensemble, will be guest conductor for this holiday concert by the Blue Sky Light Music Ensemble.

Where: Working People's

Cultural Palace, east of Tian'anmen **When:** December 24, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-580 yuan **Tel:** 8407 1331



Crystal Christmas Ball

A sumptuous celebration, with halls decked with boughs of holly, candles, fairy lights, flowing wine and fabulous, world-class entertainment. Indulge yourself with a magnificent buffet including international and Chinese specialties.

Where: Conference hall and grand ballroom, China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomenwai Dajie, Chaoyang **When:** December 24, 6:30-11 pm **Cost:** 1,388-1,888 yuan **Tel:** 6505 2266 ext. 6350

Sleepless Christmas Night with Panoply

Britain's Panoply group is made up of several young, passionate musicians who combine classical, Latin, tango and soft music styles - making this concert a feast for all kinds of music lovers.

Where: Forbidden City Music Hall, inside Zhongshan Park, Xicheng **When:** December 24, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 50-380 yuan **Tel:** 6559 8285

TV and Radio Highlights

HBO

17 Friday

Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines 9 pm

18 Saturday

What a Girl Wants 9 pm

19 Sunday

The Matrix Reloaded 8 pm

20 Monday

Virtual Storm 9 pm

21 Tuesday

Head of State 8:25 pm

22 Wednesday

Final Destination 2 10:35 pm

23 Thursday

Tears of The Sun 9 pm

CCTV-9

Monday - Friday

Around China 6:30 am

Culture Express 8:30 am

Nature and Science /

Chinese Civilization 11:30 am

Culture Express 2:30 pm

Nature and Science /

Chinese Civilization 5:30 pm

Dialogue 7:30 pm

News Updates /

Asia Today 8 pm

Sports Scene 11:15 pm

Saturday

Travelogue 9:30 am

Center Stage 11:30 am

Sunday

Sports Weekend 10 am

Documentary 10:30 am

This Week 12:30 am

China Radio International 91.5 FM

Monday - Friday

Easy FM Afternoon 2-7 pm

Fun in Beijing 5-5:30 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

Saturday

Music Memories 8:05-11 am

Euro Hit 40 12:05-1 pm

Musique Sans Frontières 6:05-8 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

Sunday

Music Memories 8:05-11 am

Jazz Beat 6:05-8 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

We are glad to receive your feedback. We will print employment, language-exchange and accommodation information for individuals. Feel free to email us at bjtodayinfo@ynet.com or call 6590 2518

By Zhang Jianzhong

By Hester Xu and Yan Zhang

As more and more Chinese people get into foreign travel, some may be tempted by the idea of spending Christmas in a stylish European capital. But be warned: no season is more tempting than Christmas to seriously abuse your credit card, especially because of the traditional post-Christmas sales. So remember to pick up a tax form from the shops so you can claim back duty free.

London

For many Londoners, the Christmas shopping spree begins on Boxing Day on December 26. Hundreds of thousands of people queue up outside big department stores in the early morning to snap up items sold at huge discounts. But visitors have a whole month to pick up their favourites from what's left of the first-wave assault.



Sale signs along New Bond Street

Old Bond Street and New Bond Street are home to the most elegant and expensive shops in town. Designer clothing such as Gucci, Hermes and Versace is as easily found as top brand perfume, art and antiques. But it's not only for the super-rich. You never know, you might find that £1000 Joseph fur coat going for a song at £250. It's easy to get to Bond street via the city subway system, the London Underground.

Regent Street is another favourite destination for tourists. Besides the trademark double deck buses running up and down the street, the long Mercedes buses (that are destined to replace the nostalgic double deckers) and roomy taxi cars that help contribute to the usual traffic jam, you can find as many shops as you want from the luxurious ones to the most common types such as Acquascutum, Burberry, Hugo Boss, Zara, Levi's and Esprit. Most items are 30% to 50% off during the sales, giving you a perfect reason to lavish both your time and money here.

As a major retailing spot and a shopping paradise among Londoners, Selfridges tries to put everything under one roof. First time visitors may be awed by the size of the store and the variety of brands provided here, but the huge five-storey department store is definitely worth a look. You can find almost everything from health care and fashion to home furnishings. Don't forget to go to the top floor where you may find some rare designer gear selling for bargain prices. Walking along Oxford Street, it's virtually impossible to miss the grand-looking old building with enthusiastic shoppers trailing in and out the doors.



Harvey Nichols

Knightsbridge is probably best known for Harrods and Harvey Nichols department stores. Owned by Mohammed al-Fayed (the father of Dodi al-Fayed, who was killed with Princess Diana in a car crash), Harrods claims to offer "everything for everyone everywhere." Every Christmas the shoppers flock to marvel at the splendours available, and descend on the great halls weeks later to pick through its world-famous annual sale. Besides buying things you don't normally find elsewhere, you've got three more reasons to shop at Harrods: a chance to show off the coveted green coloured Harrods' shopping bag, eating in the dazzling Food Hall and using the five-star luxurious washroom for free!

Unlike the palatial Harrods, Harvey Nichols is fashionable and stylish. Here you can find the cream of international fashion and it's all super cool with names like Gaultier, McQueen, Tocca and Joseph to choose from with Hugo Boss, Helmut Lang and Tommy Hilfiger for the men. There's also a small food hall and some fearfully stylish bars and restaurants in the store. For boutique shops of more top-



Printemps Christmas display

Photos by Yan Zhang

notch designer fashions, head up the road to Sloan Street. The Gucci store under the Westin Hotel is extremely popular among Asian shoppers who make up the largest portion of the queue waiting outside in the morning every year.

Paris

Sales season starts a bit late in Paris on January 15 and lasts until February. But shoppers still have the choice whether to swoop on the sales as soon as it begins on the first day, or wait for reductions to increase from some 30-50 percent – and in some cases 70 – over the fixed six-week sale period.



Galeries Lafayette

Forget the glamorous Champs Elysees and experience the grand shopping experience in "Grand Magasins" (department stores) in Paris! The flagship store of Galeries Lafayette on boulevard Haussmann looks like an art gallery with its windows on the boulevard displaying world famous brands. Inside the multi-layered, domed fortress clad in glass and stone, the store bulges with thousands of designer items and the world's largest perfumery. Don't miss the delectable comestibles department, stocked with the best of everything from herbed goat cheese to Iranian caviar.

The Printemps department store stands just beside Lafayette, boasting three buildings with 43,000 square meters of selling space. It has a wide and varied product offering showcasing the major brands, including hundreds on an exclusive basis. Both stores can be reached by Metro at Havre Caumartin and Opera station.

The super-modern La Samaritaine overlooking Pont Neuf occupies four buildings. The greatest specialty of this less expensive department store has to be Maison Deco with the most unique bedding department in Paris and a grand selection of tasteful furniture. It's always a good idea to get there by Metro; the nearest stations are Pont-Neuf, Louvre-Rivoli and Chatelet.

Amsterdam

Come to the capital of the world's most densely populated country for Christmas shopping in Amsterdam. But if you think all stores there are small and compact, you couldn't be more wrong.



De Bijenkorf

Occupying a few blocks along Dam 1 in the heart of the city, De Bijenkorf (which means, quite descriptively, the Beehive) is to Amsterdam what Harrods is to London. There's a good range of clothing – both designer and own-label – kidswear, jewellery, cosmetics, shoes, accessories and a wonderful household goods department. The Chill Out department on the fifth floor caters to hip young things in search of street wear, club wear, wacky foodstuffs and kitsch accessories, while the store's restaurant, La Ruche, is a good lunch spot. The Sinterklaas and Christmas displays are extravagant and hugely popular. To save yourself some trouble, you can even do tax-free shopping in the store instead of waiting to claim at the airport; just remember to show your passport and plane tickets.

Across a series of rings of beautiful canals, for which Amsterdam is famous, the main shopping street Nieuwedijk-Kalverstraat about is a crowded promenade zigzagging along one kilometer and full of shops. This pedestrian area is close to Central Station and is dedicated mainly to clothing, sportswear, music and gift shops with that special Amsterdam vibe. Paying a visit to the famous floating flower market at one point on the street is a good way to lighten your shopping spirit for the day. To get to both places, take trams 4, 9, 1, 6 and 24.